

PUBLIC SCHOOL LIFE

BOYS PARENTS MASTERS

by

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A DEDICATORY LETTER TO ARNOLD LUNN

December 6, 1921.

MY DEAR ARNOLD,—It was with genuine surprise that I read the other day, while turning over the pages of *The Harrovians*, the date 1913 upon the title-page. Only eight years ago, and since then so much has happened. What a long while it seems since *The Harrovians* was the most borrowed book in the house, and we passed the hours of evening hall, that should have been spent in the study of irregular verbs, in eager discussions on your book. It was a revelation to us—we schoolboys of 1913. It explained us to ourselves. We thought then that the last word on the subject had been said.

But one can never say the last word on such a subject as the Public Schools, especially in a novel. In a novel one is constrained to tell a story or to reveal a character. In *The Harrovians* you dealt with the Public School System only in as far as it affected the development of Peter, and in *Loose Ends* you found yourself equally fettered with regard to Maurice. It is for this

A Dedicatory Letter

reason that I feel there is still room for a book such as this, which, though a narrative, has for its object simply the analysis and presentation of public school life. At any rate I hope that you may think, when you come to read it, that it was worth doing. If you do not, well then at least here is your name after the title-page in grateful tribute to many pleasant hours spent in the company of yourself and of your books, and in the hope of many more such hours.

For their sake, if not for its own sake, please accept this book, and believe me,

As ever, your sincere friend,

ALEC WAUGH.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY	I
II. THE PREPARATORY SCHOOL	20
III. THE NEW BOY	38
IV. THE SECOND YEAR	60
V. ATHLETICISM	76
VI. THE TRUE ETHICS OF CRIBBING	91
VII. MORALITY AND THE ROMANTIC FRIENDSHIP	124
VIII. THE MIDDLE YEARS	161
IX. PREFECTSHIP	171
X. THE LAST TERM	198
XI. THE OLD BOY AS SCHOOLMASTER AND PARENT	215
XII. SOME SUGGESTIONS: THE LEAVING AGE WITH REGARD TO MORALS	231
XIII. THE LEAVING AGE WITH REGARD TO ATHLETICS	256
XIV. CONCLUSION	263
	vii

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

TWENTY years ago a father said to his son, who had just come down from Oxford with a batting average of 35.7: 'For ten years, my boy, you have been playing cricket all through the summer at my expense. You can now either come into my business and play first-class cricket during your month's holiday in August, or, if you want to continue to play cricket all through the season, you can go down to the Oval and apply to be taken on as a professional.' The moral, the obvious moral, that is to say, is admirable. And the elderly gentleman whom I overheard repeating this story in the pavilion, leant back in his seat and affirmed proudly, though with a deep sense of the passage of good things, that it was in such a spirit that the game had been played when he was young. 'That's what cricket meant to the Studds, the Lytteltons, the Fosters. We didn't have any of these amateur professionals, none of these fine fellows who get found soft jobs by their county committees. What's the difference, I should like to know, between the fellow who gets paid five pounds a match and the fellow who is presented with the directorship of a ladies' corset factory at a comfortable salary, and who has only to go to the office once

Public School Life

a week to sign his name in the directors' attendance book?' The elderly gentleman shrugged his shoulders with disgust.

He was quite right, of course. There are too many cricketers who make as much money out of the game as any professional, yet are entitled to put initials before their name upon the score card. And the father was quite right when he insisted on the industry of his son. He was none the less right because things probably failed to turn out as they had been planned. They rarely do. We can guess what happened.

For a year the son worked hard. During his month's holiday he made a couple of centuries in first-class cricket, and various papers commenting on this achievement expressed their regret that so promising a cricketer should only be available in August. It is needless to add that the other members of the family saw to it that these references did not escape the attention of their father. Next season the county started so well, that by the end of May it stood at the head of the championship, and the young financier was entreated to turn out for the Yorkshire match in the middle of June. On such an occasion parental discipline was naturally relaxed. And an innings of 87 on a tricky wicket was followed by an invitation to play for the Gentlemen at Lords. Parental pride was flattered. Next season the same thing happened, only more frequently. There was, in fact, an understanding that he was available for all the important matches, and very soon not only the fixtures with

Middlesex, Kent, and Surrey, came to be regarded as important, but also those with Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset, and Worcester. Indeed, in five years' time the son found himself playing county cricket steadily from May to August and as an amateur. Things happen like that. Still the pact, as the elderly gentleman in the pavilion asserted, had been made in the right spirit. And it was, after all, a family affair.

But the fine distinction between the amateur and the amateur professional is defined only by the obvious moral to this story, and the subtler moral had passed unnoticed by the elderly reactionary in the pavilion. A young man, twenty-three years of age, has been expensively educated for some ten to twelve years. And he is faced at the end of his education, when it is assumed, that is to say, that he is equipped with the knowledge and trained ability that will enable him to take up that portion of the world's work for which he is best fitted, with two alternatives. Either he can go into his father's business, or else he can lose his caste and sign on as a professional cricketer. It occurred neither to the father nor to the son nor to the elderly gentleman who repeated the story in the pavilion that any other alternative was possible, or, indeed, desirable. The son was not in a position to say to his father: 'Of course I wouldn't become a pro. But I'm really not keen on your business. I shouldn't be a success at it. I'd rather do something else.' He could not say that, because there was nothing else for

Public School Life

him to do. Six years earlier he could have gone to Sandhurst. If he had worked harder at school he might possibly have passed into the Egyptian civil service. It is possible that his blue would have obtained for him a schoolmastership, but his gulf in mods. would have limited his choice of schools. And the prospects of a junior master at a second-rate Public School are not inviting. So, whatever his own inclinations might have been, he had to accept his father's offer. It is here that we find the true moral of the story; and we ask ourselves whether this young man was, in spite of his ten years at Oxford and at a Public School, really educated. He had learnt how to make centuries in county cricket, and he had acquired a certain quantity of uncorrelated information. But he had not developed the ability to perform properly the type of work for which he was best fitted, nor, indeed, had he discovered what that type of work might be. As likely as not his father's business was the last that he should have chosen. We all react from our surroundings, and he had probably become heartily sick of his father's particular form of 'shop.' He had so often sat wearily at the dinner table, fingering his bread, piling the salt into pyramids on the edge of the cruet, while his father had explained to his mother the minute details of his latest deal. 'You see, my dear, I bought in at twenty-six. . . .' Of all hideous employments the buying and selling of shares had seemed to him the weariest. And yet there was nothing for him but to accept a

desk beside a telephone with the files of the *Financial News* spread out before him.

He can have brought no enthusiasm to his work. Out of a sense of duty, and in order to improve his own position, he may have worked hard during the winter months, but he must have worked without pleasure, with his work not as an end but as a means.

Yet nothing in a man's life is of more importance than his profession. If he does not enjoy his work he values too highly the privileges that success in it will bring to him. He asks too much of his private life, and if he is disappointed, he embarks on a desperate search for pleasure. Half of the discontent of modern life, the discontent that expresses itself in endless parties, dances, and entertainments, can be traced to the reactions of men and women engaged in uncongenial employment. And so we return again to that first question. Can we call a man educated who has not discovered in what capacity he is most likely to be of service to society, or who, having discovered it, has not taken steps to qualify himself for that profession. That, in a sentence, is the case against the English Public School. A system stands or falls by its products.

And it is only natural that parents who are not particularly well off, and who have no private business into which they can draft their children, should ask themselves whether or not a public school education is worth the considerable personal sacrifice that will be entailed if their sons are to be sent to Wellington, Clifton, or Uppingham.

Public School Life

'We want to do the best for Tommy,' they say. 'But after spending £250 a year on him for five years what do we get in return? Tommy is not clever enough to pass into the civil service; he may get a mastership on a salary only slightly better than that of a Metropolitan policeman. Is it worth it?' When the head master to whom these doubts are carried, commences to enlarge on the moral qualities that are revealed and strengthened by 'the honest give and take of public school life,' the parent is still unsatisfied. 'Are you quite sure?' they say. 'Of course we know it's all exaggerated, but where there's smoke, you know, and one has heard . . .' Is it surprising that under such circumstances the mandarins of the public school profession should have erected a barricade of prejudice between themselves and criticism. Their maintenance is at stake. They have to persuade the parent that he is getting his money's worth. Otherwise he will send his son to a day school, or, worse still, to some pension in Rome or Brussels.

And so it has happened that any critic of the Public Schools is immediately driven into a false position. For so long the Public Schools have been accepted with an unquestioning reverence—for so long, that is to say, the authorities have been able to persuade the world that the goods they are selling are the best, in fact the only goods upon the market—that if any one breathes a word against them now he is labelled a revolutionary; it is assumed that politically he is a Socialist, that he wishes to substitute

co-operation for competition, that he is a harbinger of red ruin, concealing a bomb intended for William of Wykeham's Tower or the green sward of Agar's plough; that his programme involves the complete destruction of the existing fabric, and that he proposes to erect about its ruins some bizarre construction of eugenics and modernity. Nothing, as a matter of fact, is further from the truth.

The majority of assailants are anything but socialists. They consider an enlightened oligarchy the ideal form of government, and their chief quarrel with the Public Schools is the absence of that enlightened oligarchy. No one wants to destroy the Public Schools. No one would be so foolish. But we do maintain that the public school system—a very old, a very magnificent, a very venerable mansion—stands in drastic need of repair. It is some years since the drains were attended to; electric light is more serviceable than gas; the tapestries are a little moth-eaten; the books in the library are dusty. The house wants to be spring cleaned.

It is easy, of course, to say that, but it is very difficult to know how to set about it. Our institutions are mirrors in which are reflected our personal imperfections. They can be no better than ourselves; and the merchants of panaceas take for granted a world which has left behind it envy, greed, malice, and desire. To that degree of perfection we shall never attain, but we can at any rate be honest with one another. And there is no side of English life about which

Public School Life

rulers and ruled, fathers and sons, old and young have been so consistently dishonest with one another in the past as they have been about the standards and ideals of the English Public Schools.

It is the old trouble of the merchant and his goods, and though the English Public Schools do not insert double-column advertisements in the daily papers, they are at least beholden not to prejudice the value of their stock. The green-grocer does not inform you that, on the whole, his potatoes are not bad, considering that he bought them from a farmer with a leaking shed. A head master does not tell a parent that, if he is going to send his son to a Public School, his own school is not worse than any other. Yet the same man who views with grave suspicion eulogies of a patent medicine, accepts complacently the house-master's assurance that Tommy is improving enormously both morally and intellectually under his care. A school-master spends a large part of his life boosting the value of his goods, and in time, of course, he comes to believe that every word of what he says is true. The commercial traveller of two years' experience will wink his eye: 'I spun him the tale!' But the commercial traveller of ten years' experience has a solemn countenance. 'People know good stuff when they see it.'

A few weeks ago I was staying in the country with some friends, and was taken over by them to the prize-giving of the Preparatory School at which their sons were being educated. The

ceremony was enacted in the gymnasium. The staff sat at the end of the room on a raised dais, in the centre of which was a table covered with 'calf-bound mementoes of industry.' Behind this table stood the head master. He was a large, genial, middle-aged man, rubicund with a surfeit of golf, and he smiled down upon the school and upon its parents. 'Well, you boys,' he said, 'I want to tell you how pleased I am with the way you've backed me up this term. You've worked hard and you've played hard: I don't really know how long it is since we've had such a thoroughly satisfactory term: of course there are one or two young gentlemen'—and at this point a twinkle appeared in the corner of his eye—'who have been a little, well, shall we say, difficult; but that's past history, we won't say anything more about it; and, as a whole, as I've already said, I don't think I've ever had such a satisfactory set of fellows.' There were a few more remarks of mutual congratulation, and then he proceeded to the distribution of the prizes.

Afterwards I had a chat with one of the assistant masters, with whom I happened to be on fairly intimate terms.

'A wonderful fellow, the Head,' he told me. 'Do you know he's made that same speech at prize-giving for the last twenty years. Hardly a phrase different. He wants to send the parents away in a good temper. They'll get their account to-morrow. Of course he doesn't know that's why he's doing it. But it's the reason right

Public School Life

enough. And how clever that bit is about the young gentlemen who've been a little troublesome. It makes every mother feel that her boy is better than her neighbour's.'

I suggested that such an opinion was likely to be revised under the influence of the terminal report. 'Not a bit of it,' he answered. 'All our reports are strictly censored. We write them out on a piece of foolscap and the Head gets them typed; but where we write "lazy and unintelligent," the parents read "moderate." You can take my word for it that the boy who gets "moderate" in his report from here is one of earth's best dunces.'

That was, of course, at a private school; but, even at the most prosperous Public Schools there is a tacit understanding that parents should be stroked down after the manner of refractory cats. The half-term report contains frequently enough a quantity of pungent critical writing, but the parental visit to the school is invariably the occasion for much conversational flattery. Freddie, unless he has become involved in any particularly unfortunate adventure, is the object of restrained, perhaps qualified, but still potential commendation. The father is assured by the house-master that everything is going on splendidly: 'A little low in form, perhaps, rather too boisterous at times in the day room, but a sound fellow at heart, the sort of fellow that the house will be proud of one day.' And the mother's qualms are put at rest by the house-master's wife. 'The tone of the house is so excellent, you see.

No bullying at all, and Freddie's manners are so charming. Every one likes him.'

It is possible that if the house-master were taken to task in the privacy of his own study, he might be persuaded to confess himself a pragmatist. 'One has to keep them quiet,' he might say. 'The young rascal'll get on all right as long as they don't start meddling with him.' But it is hard to be honest with oneself. The schoolmaster cannot help regarding the parent in much the same way that the junior subaltern regarded the brigadier. We all know what happened when the runner brought the news that at such an hour the brigadier would visit Lieutenant Jones's gun emplacements. Lieutenant Jones specially called the brigadier's attention to what he knew would please him. He put his smartest men on guard. He assured the brigadier that everything was going quite all right, that the men were perfectly comfortable and that the supply of rations was adequate; Lieutenant Jones did everything, in fact, to get the brigadier into the next trench as soon as possible.

Which was, of course, all very rational. The brigadier's interest in Lieutenant Jones's gun emplacements was remote and theoretical, and either way was of small importance. But it is a different thing altogether when house-masters wave parents out of the way with comfortable excuses. It establishes at once a dishonest relationship. The schoolmaster does not trust the parent. He regards him as a nuisance that

Public School Life

periodically has to be appeased. And, as long as things go smoothly, he is content to leave him in the dark. There is no co-operation. And that is absolutely fatal. It means that the two people who are chiefly responsible for the boy's welfare are working at cross purposes.

The trouble does not end there. For between the parents themselves there is frequently an incomplete mutual appreciation of the difficulties of school life. Women, in the nature of things, can only know about Public Schools what men choose to tell them. That is usually remarkably little. Many a husband encourages in his wife the illusion that before he met her his life was a vague, indeterminate, ineffectual thing, the incidents of which are unworthy to be recorded. And many others on such matters as public school life consider that a lie that saves friction is justifiable. It is so easy to see how it happens.

Husband and wife are sitting after dinner on either side of the fireplace. The wife has just finished reading *The Harrovians*, and she looks up with a puzzled, unhappy look. 'Harold, dear,' she says, 'it's not like that really, is it? If it were true I couldn't think of sending Freddie to such a place.' And what is Harold to say? He has read *The Harrovians*. He knows that substantially it is true, but equally well he knows that if he acknowledges this to his wife his domestic life for the next six years will be complicated by incessant arguments and anxieties. To begin with he will have to spend many evenings of discussion before he can persuade his wife of

the advisability of sending Freddie to Rugby. And afterwards there will be constant uncasiness. His wife will fret. She will want to pay visits to Rugby, to interview the head master, to ask her son uncomfortable questions. His own life would become unbearable. And a lie smooths out so much. 'Oh, no, dear, quite unlike the Rugby of my day. An exaggerated picture of a bad house in a bad school, that's all it is.'

Such a situation must arise fairly frequently. And at least one instance of it has come within the circle of my own experience. While I was a prisoner in Germany I lent a copy of my school story, *The Loom of Youth*, to a fellow-prisoner, who had expressed a wish to read it. A few days later he returned it to me with such a flattering display of enthusiasm that, in a moment of unusual generosity I promised to send him a copy on our return. The sequel reached me a few days later. He had returned to his room and remarked that Waugh had promised to give him a copy of that book of his, 'the thing that's all full of oaths. I don't know what I shall do with it,' he said. 'I shall have to be jolly careful that my wife doesn't read it.'

If one may generalise from such an incident, and I believe that one may, for it has its root in the eternal indolence of human nature, then not only schoolmasters and parents, but fathers and mothers are working at cross purposes. And so the boy finds himself alone, stranded in a society the nature of which he has to discover for himself. He never regards his house-master

Public School Life

as one working in co-operation with his parents for the welfare of his soul. Schoolmasters will be to him a separate caste. And although he will never reason this out with himself, he will appreciate it intuitively in the natural cunning with which he will exploit one or the other in the furtherance of his own ends. I do not mean that he is deceitful. But he may want to specialise in History, or to abandon German in favour of Greek, and he will think whether he would do better to approach his father or his house-master. There is a sort of dual monarchy, and if one sovereign is opposed to a favourite scheme, it is but natural to try one's fortune with the other.

His parents' interest in his school life must appear to him superficial. When his father comes down at half term, he has to answer innumerable questions as to his prowess on the cricket field; and very often indeed the chief pleasure that his athletic successes brings him is the thought of the delight that his father will experience. But the intimate side of his school life, his thoughts, his friendships, his troubles, his ambitions, do not enter into his relationship with his parents. In the same way his house-master's interest in his home life seems to him superficial. On his return to school he is asked a few questions about the theatres he has visited; whether he is in training for the football; has he done any private work? not a word of his intimate life. The boy ceases to regard his school life as a continuation of his home life. The two are entirely separate, and it depends on the

temperament of the individual as to which of the two he will consider the more important. We hear a great deal of talk about the influence of the home; it is, indeed, the stock argument of the pedagogue who would shelve his own responsibility on to other shoulders, but I believe that its influence is greatly overrated. Home and school present to the average boy two watertight compartments. They are different lives, a different technique is required. And human nature has at least one property of the chameleon.

A schoolboy sets out, therefore, to discover school life for himself. He knows what his parents expect him to make of it; he has a fairly shrewd idea of what his schoolmaster expects him to make of it. It remains for him to investigate school life as his companions have made it. Naturally he does not announce his investigations. He lets his parents think what they like and his schoolmasters think what they like. He goes his own way. And it is thus that school life as it is, differs so enormously from the traditional concept of it. There must be always a gulf between the reality and the imagined idea. But in public school life the gulf is between, not the schoolboy reality and his idea of it, but between the schoolboy reality, and the confused idea of it that is held by parents and masters. It is two degrees from the truth. In consequence, when any one does attempt to tell the truth there is an outburst of indignant protest. And the worst of it is that it is an honest outburst. When head masters write to the Press

Public School Life

and say 'these accusations are entirely false,' they honestly believe what they say. That is what makes everything so difficult. They have forgotten their own schooldays, and for so long they have been persuading parents of the value of a public school education that they have come to believe in their own advertisements. And yet what they have come to believe is far more remarkable than the truth. In sermons and addresses they assure the boy and his parents that school life is a miniature of the larger world; which is the statement of a fact: yet every subsequent act and utterance is in contradiction to this initial axiom. For, if that larger world did really resemble the official concept of school life, what a bizarre, what an extravagant affair it would be. It would be filled with high lights, with breathless escapades, with impossible heroics. It has been accepted as quite credible that a boy should be capable of the most extreme and loathsome brutalities, that a percentage of every school should spend its life in gambling and heavy drinking, that at least one prefect in every school should contract inconvenient liabilities at the Baron's Arms, and that to extricate himself he should forge his house-master's signature. Indeed, anything may happen provided that the course of life follows a simple process of right and wrong which leads to the triumph of virtue and the downfall of vice. It is something like a Lyceum melodrama. And, though we can all manage to enjoy for a couple of hours the fine sensationalism of *The Beggar Girl's Wedding*,

we should hardly accept its values as a philosophical background for our daily life. And yet that has actually happened in the case of the Public Schools. Mr P. G. Wodehouse, in his delightful *Mike*, makes Psmith say to a new acquaintance: 'Are you the Bully, the Pride of the School, or the Boy who is led astray and takes to drink in Chapter Sixteen?' Such figureheads exist in the popular imagination. The world believes in bullies, in villains, in straight heroes and in the weak character who goes wrong, but is saved through the influence of either the hero or the head master, or the head master's daughter, or through the sermon of an occasional preacher. It is all very jolly, of course, and no doubt the world would be a far more comfortable place if it were possible to label and pigeonhole all our friends and acquaintances. But life cannot be simplified by any arbitrary process. We have our standards of conduct, but they are shifting and relative. They are the measures that each successive society arranges for what it considers to be its convenience. And we accept them for what they are. At a Public School, however, a traditional conception has formed a code of rules for the convenience of a society that does not exist. Which is confusing: and when Desmond Coke wrote in *The Bending of a Twig* a very entertaining skit on the behaviour of a boy who had read a number of school stories, and went to Shrewsbury expecting to find bullies behind every cloister, schoolmasters laughed over the book,

Public School Life

but did not read into it any criticism of themselves.

And yet there is nothing that we need more than an honest facing of the facts of public school life. Facts are a solid neutral ground on which parents and boys and masters may meet to discuss their ideals and their difficulties. And, in the course of that discussion, they may discover, as likely as not, a way out of their troubles. The hope of this book is to provide that statement of facts. It does not set out as an educational treatise. It accepts the Public Schools as the system best suited to the material with which it deals. It suggests no new system of teaching. It does not advocate co-education. It does not advance any plea for Montessor methods. It will contain no discussion of the advantages of Greek over German. There will be no appendix with time-tables and suggested curriculum. For, as things are now, it does not matter whether Sanscrit is substituted for mathematics: the boy will learn equally little of either. It is intended as a human study of public school life, as an attempt to break down that conspiracy of silence, that relationship of evasion and deceit that exists officially between parents, boys, and masters; and from time to time it will suggest solutions.

It is, of course, only an attempt. For no one person can see more than a side of the truth. However impartial we try to be, we can see in a situation only what the limitations of our personality allow us. We are all at tether.

Introductory

During the last three years many public men have visited Russia; they have been honest men, and we know quite well that they went there with the firm intention of telling nothing but the truth. But, before they went, we could have told them exactly what they would say on their return. Yet the analogy does not quite hold good. For we, too, have gone, each of us, to a Public School with a preconceived idea of what school life would be, and each of us in turn has had that conception destroyed by actuality, and each in turn has had to create for himself his own picture. It follows then that there must in each picture be a certain measure of truth.

CHAPTER II

THE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

WE hear much of the embarrassed misery of a boy's first week at school. And, certainly, it is pretty wretched. Mr Vachell compared it to the first plunge into an ice-cold swimming bath: the sudden shock, and, afterwards, the glory of a swim. But it is the inaction, the loneliness of the first week that is so difficult. It is more like standing on the edge of the swimming bath on a cold day waiting for the signal that will start the race. And yet the change must have been a great deal more difficult for our parents than it was for us. The preparatory school system is of more or less recent growth, and, when one considers how much one learnt at a Preparatory School, in *esprit de corps*, in patience, in sportsmanship, in the give and take of a communal life, one wonders how an earlier generation managed to survive the first term. School life by all accounts was a fairly barbarous business in the eighties, and by what strange roads our parents came to those rough waters. Some came straight from home, some from private tutors: the majority from the old-fashioned dame school. It is not surprising that the Preparatory Schools should have so increased in number and improved in quality.

The Preparatory School

For the Preparatory School fulfils a most important function, and it fulfils it extremely efficiently. It is what it sets out to be, a school that will take a small boy almost from the nursery, and train him in the course of four or five years to take his place in a large Public School. The task that the head master of a Preparatory School has to tackle is not, however, anything like so hard as that which confronts the head master of a Public School. For a Public School has to equip a boy for life; and life is vast, indeterminate, a swiftly moving river that is never the same from one moment to another. The Preparatory School, on the other hand, has only to equip a boy for a Public School, and the Public School is a fixed quantity. As regards curriculum, the task is simple. The required standard of education is known. A certain percentage in the common entrance examination has to be obtained. The school has not to discover the career for which its individual members are best suited. It has merely to decide which of them are good enough to be trained specially for scholarships. The main object of the Preparatory School, however, is to produce presentable specimens of society, boys who will do the right thing in the right circumstances. And this the Preparatory School does admirably well.

It is at a Preparatory School that boys learn manners, courtesy, the proper behaviour in the presence of ladies. But these things, you may say, a boy will learn at home. No doubt he ought to, but any preparatory schoolmaster will

Public School Life

disabuse you on that point. How many small boys of seven who have not been to a school will, when they are handed a plate of cakes, take the one nearest to them rather than the one of which they fancy the appearance. How many small boys will think of opening a door for a lady, of offering her his chair when she enters the room, of apologising to his hostess if he arrives late for breakfast. These are the little things that a boy learns at a Preparatory School and that he will learn nowhere else; at all good schools a great value is placed on these points of etiquette; if anything, 'good manners' are rather overdone, and the precipitate charge of twelve or thirteen urchins towards a door handle is likely to prove embarrassing to the lady visitor who has risen from her chair.

At my own school, for instance, music lessons always took place immediately after lunch; so that, if lunch was a little late, the first boys were allowed to leave the table before grace. It was a rule, however, that no boy should ever leave the dining-room till he had asked the permission of the ladies. And many visitors were much perplexed by the repeated inaudible apologies of nervous small boys who came stumbling towards them between two close-packed tables. The good manners of a preparatory school boy are indeed slightly pedagogic. Their elbows are pressed into their sides when they eat, their wrists are raised above the table, and, in a precise voice, they request permission to trouble their next door neighbour for the salt. They are like the

The Preparatory School

critics who insist that a sonnet is not a sonnet if the last lines of the sestet form a couplet. But it is a fault on the right side. For manners, as well as morals, relax in the greater freedom of a Public School, and at the age of fifteen one has managed to substitute ease for stiffness.

It is, indeed, impossible to say how much one learns at a Preparatory School. At the age of ten one has not the necessary detachment to view oneself as an objective reality. It is impossible, for instance, to remember where, or when, was learnt the spirit of comradeship and sportsmanship that is, perhaps, the most lovable quality of the old public school boy. It is hardly inherited. For the average small boy is greedy, selfish, and acquisitive; and, when one is given leg before to a left-hand round the wicket bowler who is turning the ball from the off, the temptation to protest against the umpire's decision is natural. The primitive man, indeed, would have uprooted a stump and walked to the other end of the pitch. Where does one learn to turn straight round and walk towards the pavilion? I think it is at the Preparatory School. A small boy knows that he has got to play cricket like a sportsman; he knows that a sportsman does not question the umpire's decision; and he is terribly afraid of doing the wrong thing in the presence of his schoolfellows. The first time he is given out caught at the wicket off his pad, a blind anger seizes him. His mouth opens to make a protest. The same thing happened last year when he was playing cricket in the garden

Public School Life

with his brother and sister, and, when they insisted that he was out, he sat down in the middle of the field and howled till they told him he could continue his innings. The temptation to repeat the experiment is considerable. But he dare not make any exhibition of himself. He would be mercilessly ragged; and so he returns to his seat under the trees and contents himself with the announcement that Jones is a mean sneak who was trying to get a revenge for the kicking he got that morning. And of course the incident will be repeated. Umpires make mistakes in first-class cricket: small boys make them with a melancholy frequency on lower grounds, and few batsmen are satisfied with an l.b.w. decision. The young cricketer has many opportunities of displaying the Christian qualities of patience and restraint, and every time the temptation to sit down in the middle of the pitch and howl grows weaker. 'The monster custom is angel yet in this,' and, by the time he goes to his Public School, his features have learnt to assume a good-natured smile, and he says something about it being all in the game and that last week he had a decision in his favour.

I am inclined to think that in that example can be found the essence of preparatory school life; the habits of courtesy and sportsmanship are acquired till they become a second nature. We are told that man is a logical creature, that when he has been properly educated it will be possible for forty million people to live in one

The Preparatory School

country without competition; that in an enlightened society there will be no need for policemen, for every man will instinctively appreciate what is right. It may be so. No one knows what the world will be like two thousand years hence. But, in the meantime, I think we do wisely to train small boys as we train an animal. We thrash our dog if he plays havoc in our neighbour's chicken run, and we rag the small boy who disputes the umpire's decision. The dog does not chase chickens again, nor does the small boy argue in the middle of the pitch.

It is a strange business, though, this acquiring of social habits, and, though preparatory school life has been only dealt with in a small way by educationalists and novelists, the process is certainly interesting. Everything, to allow for the subsequent relaxation at the Public School, is slightly overdone, and the small boy tends to become a prig. It is only natural that he should. By nature he is at that time a somewhat poisonous little beast. He is the victim of numberless petty faults and jealousies; and when he becomes reformed he is self-righteous. He would never think of sneaking, of course, but he would not hesitate to whisper just as a master is coming into the class-room, 'Oh, shut up, Jones.' He always enjoys putting some one else in the wrong, and Arnold Lunn has, in *The Harrovians*, an incident that provides an admirable example of this attitude. A member of the school has just died. He was not a popular boy; he was not distinguished in games or work. No one really

Public School Life

mind, but the school felt bound to present a countenance of appropriate melancholy. A certain Clayford, however, had a set of stamps he wished to sell, and he accosted cheerfully a couple of boys who were discussing the last hours of their lost comrade. 'I say, you chaps, like to buy a complete set of Borneos surcharged Labuan?'

'Not to-day, thank you,' said Peter stiffly.

'We're not much interested in stamps *to-day*,' added Morgan.

It is a perfect picture.

And as there is no stricter moralist than the potential rake, there is no one with a more rigid code of honour than the preparatory school boy. 'Owning up' becomes a fetish. Popular opinion drives the wretched urchin into the head master's study. I remember once that on the eve of a school match a member of the eleven went sick with a headache. There was immediate consternation. Ferguson might not be a good bowler, his batting was indifferent and he missed his catches more often than not, but he was a distinct improvement on Evans, the twelfth man. The chances of a victory were prejudiced and then some one recollected that that morning Smith had smacked Ferguson's head in the changing room. It also happened that, for the moment, Smith was extremely unpopular. Morison's people had just paid their half-term visit to the school, and when the Head had brought Morison's mother into the room, Smith had not stood up. It had been a direct insult to Morison's mater. Every one had said so,

The Preparatory School

and none of us would listen to Smith's excuse that he had had his back to the door, and was filling his fountain pen, a combination of circumstances that rendered a sudden leap to the feet impossible.

'Don't argue, Smith; you're a cad.' That's what every one had said; and when it was remembered that Smith had punched Ferguson's head that morning, the fury of popular opinion knew no limit.

'You've lost the match, I hope you know; you'll have to own up, of course,' we said.

Smith was resentful. He did not see why he should.

'Because, Smith, that is what a gentleman does under such circumstances.'

Smith was still obstinate. He did not see why Ferguson should have got a headache just because of this. People had had their heads punched before without getting headaches. There was a murmur of contumely.

'But that wasn't an ordinary punch, Smith; you hit him with all your force.'

The suggestion that it was not an ordinary punch flattered Smith's pride. He, too, was inclined to think that there had been about that punch a certain something. He grudgingly admitted that it had been a pretty hard smack.

'Even so, though, I don't see how things are going to be made any better by my owning up.'

Such an attitude was opposed to every idea of preparatory school honour. There was a shudder of supreme contempt.

Public School Life

'Perhaps *you* don't, Smith.' And there the argument stopped. But for the rest of the day Smith's life was made miserable. Every time any one passed him they said: 'Owned up yet?' No one would talk to him at tea-time; when he joined a group afterwards the group dispersed and he was left alone. Finally, of two evils, confession appeared to him the less, and, after prayers, he pushed open the door of the head master's study and blurted out to the accompaniment of big quivering sobs that he had punched Ferguson's head in the changing-room and given him a headache, and, perhaps, lost the match.

A couple of years ago I went down to my old school, and, just before lunch, when the whole school was collected in the hall, the head master announced that he wanted the name of the boy who had left the tap running in the bathroom. There was a slight commotion in a far corner; one boy was being nudged and pressed forward. There was a whisper of 'Go on, Hunter.' All eyes were turned in his direction. There was no course for Hunter but to come forward into the open and confess.

And yet, as likely as not, some one else was the offender. It was the sort of offence that any one might commit. It is not easy to remember what one has forgotten. No doubt he thought he had turned off the tap, otherwise he would hardly have left the bathroom; yet he might very likely have done it. His companions told him that he had, and his faith in their loving

The Preparatory School

kindness was not sufficient for him to have wondered why they had not repaired his mistake. If Hunter had not owned up he would have had to say definitely that he had not left the tap running, and that he could not truthfully have done. So he owned up.

The fear of being thought a coward very often makes the preparatory school boy confess to sins that he has never committed, and it is usually the ones who are most often in trouble who find themselves in this position. After all, if you are always getting into scrapes, are always engaged in some misadventure, it is very hard to tell whether, on a particular occasion, you are innocent or not. The head master comes into a class-room in the afternoon.

‘Now look here, you fellows,’ he says, ‘you know I’ve told you that I won’t have you running down that steep path to the football field. You are bound to fall down; you must walk. I’ve told you that a hundred times. Now the matron tells me that she saw one of you running down there this morning. I want to know that boy’s name.’

What is Jones mi. to do? He has run down that path so often. Whether or not he did so that morning he cannot remember. He has had so much to think about since then. Yet, suppose he did run down the hill, and suppose that some one saw him. If he does not own up, he will be called a coward all over the school. Far better ‘own up,’ and receive some small punishment. Indeed, it may be said that the Jones mi.’s of

Public School Life

the world form a rule for themselves, that they own up to every offence of which they are not dead certain that they are innocent. Head masters, like batsmen, have to have the benefit of the doubt.

It is equally difficult to acknowledge innocence in the midst of crime. At my old school there was an excellent rule that for half an hour after lunch we should sit in our class-rooms and read quietly. One afternoon this peaceful siesta was disturbed by a loud and fierce and general discussion of the superiority of Yorkshire cricket over that of Lancashire. The particular classroom unfortunately happened to be situated beneath the nursery of the head master's children, and the angry voices of the disputants roused from her slumbers a recent addition to the family. The complaints of a very indignant nurse forced a very busy master to disturb the repose of that restful half-hour after lunch. On this occasion the usual formula was reversed. He did not ask the names of the boys who had been talking, he asked for the names of the boys who had not been talking. Now, as it happened, I had taken no part in the argument. I am a Middlesex supporter, I had just received as a birthday present a bound volume of *Chums*, I was also, at the time, in popular disfavour. So I had seated myself in a far corner of the room and read steadily, with my fingers pressed into my ears. But I did not dare to say so. I should never have been forgiven. It would have been the action of a conscientious objector. No one would have

The Preparatory School

believed me. I realised how hopelessly out of things I should feel while the rest of the school were receiving their punishment. Suppose a half-holiday was stopped—what on earth should I do with a half-holiday all to myself? I should be much happier working out theorems in a class-room. And it was also possible that I might have said something that some one had overheard—at any rate, I was not going to risk it. I sat silent at my desk and accepted meekly the common lot.

From the outside a Preparatory School looks very much like a miniature Public School. It presents the same features, the same routine, the same curriculum; there is even some attempt at a prefectorial system. Superficially they have much in common. But there the resemblance ends. The scale of values is altogether different. Indeed the Preparatory School is very like the Public School of traditional conception. Talbot Baines Reed is only read by boys of under thirteen; and boys of under thirteen have moulded themselves after his image. There are, of course, none of the high-lights, the heroism, the sacrifice. There are no nocturnal visits to ostlers; but otherwise it is not unlike *The Fifth Form at St Dominic's*. The smallest boys do resemble the 'Tadpoles' of that popular romance. In spite of frequent visits to the bathroom their hands and collars are continually smeared with ink; when they go for walks at least one of them falls into the ditch and cuts his trousers; they are all dog-eared except at

Public School Life

meal times and at the start of the morning's work. And they have the same attitude to life. They are continually forming rival gangs; they are on the brink of feuds and jealousies. They side against one another. Each boy in turn becomes the object of general dislike. There is a certain amount of bullying, a great deal more than there is at most public schools. New boys, for instance, are subjected to an inquisition. They are asked what their father is, and whether they would rather be a bigger ass than they look, or look a bigger ass than they are. At a Public School only one boy in every twenty gets really ragged, and usually for obvious reasons. But at a Preparatory School every one has to put up with a certain amount of persecution. There is a good deal of sycophancy, and the independent learn many lessons.

But when all is said and done, the really big difference between the Preparatory and the Public School is the absence of the cult of athleticism. The scholar is entitled to and receives as much respect as the cricketer and for obvious reasons. The Preparatory School has to contend with a far more competitive system than the Public School. Schools have their ups and downs. Numbers rise and fall, but a Public School that has a name can be always certain of the support of its old boys. It has a firmly established tradition. Only a few Preparatory Schools, on the other hand, possess this questionable advantage. The name of only a few are familiar. None of them would justify the

The Preparatory School

journalist in the employment of his cliché 'a household word.' The Preparatory School depends largely on the energy and personality of one man, and the scholars are, after all, his exhibition blooms. He may produce cricketer after cricketer, but the Public School will take all the credit. We speak of Hedges and Chapman and Stevens as products of Tonbridge, Uppingham, and U.C.S. respectively. We do not know where they learnt the groundwork of the game. The scholar, however, comes into prominence while he is still at his Preparatory School. The name of the school is put after the name of the successful candidate. It is the scholar, not the cricketer, who advertises a school. If the head master of a Preparatory School told you that seven of his old boys were at that time playing in their Public School Eleven, you would not feel that he was entitled to any extravagant credit. If, however, he told you that in one year seven of his boys had won scholarships you would be considerably impressed. The boys themselves naturally, of course, are more interested in cricket than in Greek, but they appreciate that scholastic triumph has a marketable value, and the school officially is prouder of its Winchester scholar than of its slow left-hand bowler. The small boy who goes home for the holidays knows that he can impress his uncle by the announcement that Hughes got the second Eton scholarship, but that the statement that they beat Southdown by 100 runs and that Evans took seven wickets for

Public School Life

twenty-three will elicit only a polite 'really.' It is exactly the opposite at a Public School. The new boy will proudly announce that the captain of his house had played for Notts. There is a standard by which one can judge public school cricket and football; there is no more a standard for the performances of preparatory school athletes than there is for the startling figures of the village fast bowler. Naturally there is more excitement when a new boy shows an uncanny apprehension of the theorems of geometry than over a new boy who brings the ball back naturally from the off. As a result the preparatory master is inclined to push the clever boys on too fast. It is the one real mistake that the Preparatory School makes, and it should be noticed. For it is serious.

A boy of eighteen can stand the strain of systematic coaching; a boy of twelve cannot. The preparatory scholar is more often than not a hot-house product. He has drawn on his reserves too early; his mind has been forced into a groove at the start. He is trained like a pet Pomeranian, and he is kept in blinkers; he is not allowed to explore bye-paths that are of interest to him. That would be prejudicial to his chances. He has to keep on the straight road of scholarship. He may get his scholarship; he probably will, for such Preparatory Schools are specialists at the game, but, in the long run, it does not pay. The boy has been forced too soon and he is stale by the time he gets to his Public School.

The Preparatory School

It is very interesting to note how often, in the course of a year or two, boys who did not get scholarships are higher up in the school than their successful rivals : a man who starts the half-mile at a hundred yards pace leads at the end of the first lap, but he does not win the race. And the preparatory school master is inclined to forget that, while a Winchester scholarship is the whole race for him, it is only the first lap for the boy. He naturally wants the credit of the scholarship for his school, but on the other hand he has to be unselfish. He has to ask himself whether, in the long run, it is not better for the boy to carry on with the general routine and take the scholarship examination in his stride. If he succeeds well and good; if not, there is plenty of time. And the wise parent will insist on this.

The boy himself, however, realises that his world is that of the green leaf and the bud. It is a time of sowing. And the fruits will show elsewhere. He knows that his career will only start when he reaches his Public School. The fact is always being forced upon his attention. 'This sort of thing is all very well here,' his masters will tell him, 'but it won't work at your Public School.' In the same way the commandant at Sandhurst used to adjure us in his speeches, 'to keep always before you the thought of the day when you will join your regiment.'

There is the fear and the attraction of the unknown future. And, for the sake of it, a boy

Public School Life

will work far harder than he would otherwise have done. He looks beyond the rewards and position that his own school offers. It is not enough to be in the highest form, not enough to be in the first eleven. He must improve himself so as to be able to take a high place in the next stage of his career. A public school boy, on the other hand, regards the honours that his school has to offer as an end sufficient in themselves. In occasional addresses he is adjured to think of the day when he will have to step out of that cloistered peace into the rush and traffic of life ; but that day is distant. He has little ambition beyond ' a ribboned coat ' and a seat at the high table. His horizon is contracted, and his behaviour is that of those who do not believe in a survival after death. He places an undue value upon the immediate and the present. The preparatory school boy always looks ahead to a future stage of life. And so it is that, when the last day at school comes, he is not the victim of the surprised sentimentality that overcomes the public school boy. He has begun to feel that he has outgrown his surroundings. He has chafed at the restraint of childhood. He has felt that success or failure is of little importance: so soon he will be making a fresh start. He has lived in the future. He has spent long summer evenings reading the history of his new school. He has studied photographs of its buildings; he has pored over old numbers of the school magazines, and has formed a romantic conception of the giants of whose prowess he has read. The

The Preparatory School

future opens before him with limitless opportunities, and he can face it with an eager confidence after his five long years of discipline. How long they have taken in the passing, and yet in retrospect how flat they appear, how colourless, how tiresome. Nothing has happened; day has followed day. Ah, well, that is over now. Life is to begin. The new boy sets out hungry for experience. On the last day at his Preparatory School he is addressed, in company with the other boys who are leaving, by the head master. His egotism is flattered by the assurance that the honour of his old school lies in his hands. He is told that he will need a firm upper lip and a stout heart. He listens to a recommendation of honesty, truthfulness, and courage—all this he has heard before. He has read so many school stories. And then, suddenly, he is startled by a warning against temptations, the nature of which he imperfectly understands. His curiosity is roused. He learns that if he yields to these temptations his career will be spoilt, his health and brain will be ruined. How this fate is going to be brought about he is not certain, but he agrees with his head master that it is a fatality at all costs to be avoided. He asks a friend for enlightenment and receives a superior answer of: 'Oh, don't you know!' which makes him think that his friend knows even less about it than he does. At any rate this particular temptation has not yet presented itself, and the acknowledgment of its existence fades from his contemplation of a golden future.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW BOY

ALPHA and Omega are the most widely known letters of the Greek alphabet. And the first and last weeks of a public school career have inspired more essays and sermons than the other two hundred and fifty weeks put together. Yet in neither the beginning nor the end is to be found the essence of school life. The last week is a period of agreeable sentiment. The first of embarrassed loneliness. The new boy feels that he has no part in the life of the school. On that first afternoon, when he has said good-bye to his parents, and turns to walk away from the station, the school buildings, chapel, studies, cloisters, assume in the mellow September sunlight the prospect of a distant city that one day he may be privileged to enter. At present he is outside it, as he stands at the edge of the courts, forlorn in his black tie and wide brimmed straw hat, while the stream of boys in bowler hats and gaily coloured ties pours up from the station. On all sides he hears shouts of welcome, snatches of eager conversation. No one takes the least notice of him. He is an unrecognised foreigner.

During supper, he sits silent and nervous among the new boys at the day-room table.

The New Boy

From time to time he casts hesitating glances at the raised table where the prefects sit. What giants they seem. He wonders which is Featherstone, the head of the House?¹ Is that imposing figure with the black hair brushed back from his forehead, the G. O. Evans, who made 121 in the Public School's match at Lords? Can it be possible that he and they are members of the same society?

A prefect rises from the high table and leaves the hall. Immediately forms are pushed back and the long narrow passage leading to the dormitories is filled with sound. The new boy is taken with the stream. What will happen to him now, he wonders? He has always understood that most of the ragging takes place in the dormitories. Will all new boys be subjected to some common lot? In a way he almost hopes that they will. He may thus be given an opportunity of showing his courage. He will be marked down at once as 'a bit of a sport.'

But nothing happens. He walks timidly into the large airy room with its bare boards, its row of wash-hand stands and red-quilted beds. He sees his bag lying in the middle of the floor. Three hours earlier when he and his parents had been shown round by the house-master's wife, he had placed his bag on the corner bed. It had seemed to him a good idea to reserve that

¹ I have used throughout this book the idiom of my own school. The Head of a house or of the school is the head boy in work. The Captainship of a house or of the school is a term applicable only to athletic prominence.

Public School Life

particular bed. He would then be open to attack only on one side. Memories of Horatius Cocles had stirred his imagination. But some one else is already undressing there. He picks up his bag, and is about to place it on the bed nearest him when a warning voice informs him that Jones has bagged that bed. He looks round him in dismay. There are only two vacant beds. 'May I have that one?' he asks. The boy with the warning voice looks surprised at being questioned. 'I should think so,' he says, 'unless Hughes wants it. He had it last term.' The new boy does not know whether or not he dare begin to undress beside the bed that Hughes may possibly commandeer. He stands irresolute; then decides to take the risk. There is nothing to choose between the two positions, and Hughes would probably prefer a change.

He begins slowly to undress. No one takes the least notice of him. No one evinces the slightest inclination to test the courage of the new man. No hardened bully enters with a blanket. It is possible that two blasé young gentlemen from another dormitory will stroll in 'just to have a look at the new men,' will make a cursory examination, and having expressed their disgust at 'such an appalling crew,' will seek better fortune elsewhere. That will be all. The inquisition of preparatory school terrors is a myth. This generation is not more timid than its predecessors, but it is more subtle. The boy who has just ceased to be labelled 'new' wishes to impress his importance on the new boy.

Public School Life

anteroom, cowed and unhappy by an exhibition that is being conducted, though he does not know it, entirely for his benefit, so does the new boy lie back in bed on his first night, wondering what it is all about.

The jargon puzzles him ; the attitude to life puzzles him. The boy with the warning voice is lamenting that he has got his ' budge.'

' Rotten luck,' he says. ' I should like to have stopped in old Moke's for at least a year. I did just well enough in each paper to avoid being bottled. Fourteenth I came out, and now they've started a new form, so we've all got shoved up.' The rest of the dormitory express sympathy. Then some one wonders whether Davenport will turn ' pi ' now he's a ' pre ' ; the opinion is expressed that Ferguson will find himself pretty lonely now that Wodehouse has left. A lot of people have apparently been waiting a long time to kick him with impunity. Some one says, ' Let's make up the Fifteen,' and the rival claims of Bradshaw and Murray are carefully weighed. And all the while four wretched new boys listen in silent, confused wonderment.

The conversation gradually becomes spasmodic. There are longer and longer pauses between the conclusion of one topic and the introduction of another. ' Well,' says the senior boy, ' about time we were going to sleep. Good-night all.' There is a murmur of ' good-night ': silence: and then again the warning voice. ' Oh, but I say, Stewart, what about the new men's concert?'

There is immediate interest among the senior members. Of course, they had forgotten that . . . the new men's concert.

'Too late now,' says Stewart. 'Let's have it on Sunday.'

'Hear that, you new fellows; you must all have a song by Sunday. Good-night.'

But there is little sleep for the new boy. Where is he? What has happened to him? Such a little while ago he was secure, garrisoned, sheltered by his home. Only twelve hours. He begins to wish that he had not been so anxious to leave his prep. Why hadn't he stayed on there another year? He would have been head of the school. At this very moment if he had not been so absurdly impetuous he would be turning over to go to sleep, having wished his dormitory 'good-night.' Just as Stewart had done. The thought of the concert terrifies him. He is a bad singer. Will they make him stand on a chair? will they throw boots at him if his voice quavers, or if he forgets the words? It will be a long-drawn agony.

And for a couple of days he is made wretched by the prospect of this ordeal. It allows him no peace of mind. In form, on the football field, as he walks up to the tuck shop, the disquieting thought descends to torture him. But in the end it is a very tame affair. It takes place after lights out, and new boys, as well as lovers, win a strange courage of the darkness. Moreover, the object of the concert is to amuse the senior members of the dormitory, and bad

Public School Life

singing amuses no one. Myself, I remember being stopped before I had completed one verse of 'The British Grenadiers,' whereas the boy next to me, who had an agreeable treble voice was made to sing, 'Put on your ta-ta, little girlie,' every other night for the rest of the term.

The concert is practically the sole direct ordeal that a new boy has to face: yet it is probable that he would, on the whole, prefer the old-fashioned methods. It is better to be ragged than to be ignored. And he spends most of his first week wondering whether he has done the right thing. It is especially difficult if he finds himself placed high in the school. The lower forms are mainly composed of new boys, companions in calamity, and the master in charge of the second is lenient during the early days. It is different for the boy who finds himself in the Lower Fifth, or Upper Fourth. As likely as not there is only one other new boy in his house in the same form, and, when he cannot find that particular boy, there is no one to whom he may turn for advice. He soon learns that it is not wise to carry his troubles to his seniors. He may find himself in his house-master's study, waiting to hand in the list of books he will require, and suddenly he remembers that he has forgotten to put down his Latin prose book on the list; he has also forgotten what Latin prose book his form uses. He casts a despairing eye round the room and recognises, leaning against a bookcase the languid, supercilious figure of Watney. What luck, he thinks, Watney has

been in the Upper Fourth two years. He is sure to know. The new boy edges towards him. 'Please,' he asks, 'what Latin prose book do we use?'

His query is met by a look of amazed, outraged disapproval. Watney looks him up and down. Then at last: 'Who are "we"?', he says. The experiment is not repeated. The new boy arrives in form without his Latin prose book and is threatened with an imposition.

The geography of the school is very puzzling.

No new boy could be expected to gather much help from the information that his class-room is 'under the library, up on the right, next to Uncle Ned's.' For at least a week he is always entering the wrong form room. In the lower forms it is customary for the master to glance round the class, see that five boys are missing, and send the senior member in search of them as a matter of course. Indeed the first week of term is very pleasant for the senior member of the lower forms. He spends most of his time searching for lost lambs, and he is in no frantic haste to complete his task. But that is in the lower form, and, in the middle and upper schools, form masters do not care to have their time wasted. The absence of Jones mi. is not regarded as a joke.

Nicknames are confusing.

The new boy does not realise that 'Crusoe' and Mr Robinson are the same person. And, when he finds himself a quarter of an hour late in Mr Robinson's class-room, his excuse that he

Public School Life

thought he had to go to 'Mr Crusoe' is not an official success. He is always on the brink of a mistake.

Probably his life is further complicated by the fact that he is playing Rugby football for the first time, and, for at least a month, his performances on the field can give him little satisfaction and less amusement. In the course of two or three puntabouts he is taught by his house-captain how to pack and how to take a pass. He is then drafted on to pick ups and house-games to fare as best he may. He fares extremely badly. He hangs about on the edge of the scrum. He catches hold of his opponents when they are dribbling and attempts an Association barge when they are running. For a long time he never touches the ball with his hands at all, and on the rare occasions when he discovers it at his feet, he takes a terrific rout at it and is contemptuously informed that he is not playing soccer. He is playing with boys older and heavier than himself. He has little chance of acquiring self-confidence: no footballer is really any use till he has scored a try, and that day is slow in coming. The new boy's chief anxiety on the field is to avoid the notice of any house caps that may be on the touchline. At half-time he will rub worm-casts on his knees to present an appearance of muddy valour. He is terribly afraid he will be reported and beaten for slacking. This fate rarely, as a matter of fact, overtakes a small boy. A beating for slackness is usually reserved for the boy about

half-way up the house who has committed no definite offence, but has been making a nuisance of himself generally.¹ Slackness on the field is the excuse for an official reprimand, and its effect is usually salutary. This, however, the new boy does not know. Games, when the house-captain is on the touchline, become a misery. During his first term he looks forward to the First Fifteen matches chiefly because on those days he will not himself have to play.

But it is in his spare time that he most acutely feels himself outside the general life of the school. He is oppressed by liberty. He does not know what to do with it. At his Preparatory School an elaborate time-table was posted on the notice-board, and every moment of his day was pigeon-holed. A boy had no excuse for not knowing at any given time what he ought to be doing, and where he ought to be doing it. There was constant supervision. But, at a Public School, provided a boy answers his name at roll-call, and fulfils his social engagements in the form room and on the football field, no one worries much what he is doing during the rest of the time. He can search for plovers' eggs, or hunt for fossils, or develop photographs, or overeat at the tuck shop. He is his own master, and this the new boy cannot understand. When he has changed after football on a half-holiday he asks himself: 'What ought I to be doing now?'

¹ I am speaking of the average house. There are frequent occasions, of course, in bad houses where this privilege of the house-captain is abused.

Public School Life

The answer is, of course: 'Nothing in particular. Whatever you like.' A disconcerting answer, for there is nothing in particular that he wants to do. The day room is inhospitable. The big chairs round the fire are occupied by the mighty. The library is only of less interest to him than the museum. The tuck shop at such an hour is full of bloods in whose presence he feels embarrassed. He wanders disconsolately round the courts. All the other new boys seem to have found something to do (a common delusion this). In the end he succeeds in finding some one equally lonely with whom he goes for a walk: and a walk, unless one is a botanist, is such a strange way of spending an afternoon, that I have since wondered whether any one after his first term ever goes for a walk at school without an ulterior motive, except when he is in training.

It is a strange business that first term, and its importance is, I think, overrated. It is not public school life. It is composed of the hesitations, the reactions of a novice. School life is on the other side of it. The new boy sees that life in fragments. It puzzles him. He tries to fit it into shape with the scale of values he acquired at his Preparatory School. And fails. The Preparatory School belongs to childhood, the Public School to adolescence. The new boy understands little of what is going on round him. Indeed there is no person whose testimony can be less relied upon than that of the new boy of four weeks' standing. He never knows what he

The New Boy

should, and what he should not, believe. The new life is so strange to him that he is prepared to accept any absurdity for the truth. The veriest nincompoop can pull his leg.

The following story is true.

It was the custom in my house for the matron to put out clean underclothes for each boy on Saturday evening. On my first Saturday I noticed that no clean pants had been put out for me. I asked an elder boy why this was. 'Oh, don't you know?' he said, 'we only have clean pants twice a term.' I believed him. The matron thought that I, in common with many others, did not start wearing pants till well into the winter. In consequence I wore the same pair till the second week in November. It is the same with regard to the more serious issues of school life. Mischief is often caused by the mistaken ideas that new boys give their parents of what does and what does not go on in their house.

I was provided the other day with a good example. At a certain house in a famous school it was the practice of the house-master's wife to sit at the day-room table for lunch. The idea was admirable. The house-master's wife was a sympathetic woman who wished to recall to the small boys the regenerating atmosphere of their homes. The results, however, were unfortunate. The small boys became communicative. In their innocence they repeated stories of which the true significance had escaped them. In their ignorance they misinterpreted stories of which

Public School Life

the nature happened to be direct. In neither case did the reputation of certain light-hearted sportsmen on the Va. table rise in the official esteem. Indeed of that particular house there was composed a limerick, the exact wording of which has more humour than propriety, to the effect that the house reports of the Sixth Form table were written by the fags. Few parents, however, would accept this explanation.

Officially the first term is usually an unqualified success. The new boy is not distracted from his studies by the stress of house politics nor by the ambitions of the football field. The weekly form order is his chief excitement. And it would be surprising, considering the qualified enthusiasm with which the majority of the form welcome this occurrence, if the new boy did not soon find himself in the running for promotion. There is, indeed, little else for him to do.¹ He lives in a world of his own. He sees a good deal of new boys in other houses, and the usual question in break on Saturday morning is: 'Where were you this week?' His offences against discipline are inconsiderable. It is 'side' for a new boy to rag in the day room, in the changing room, and in the dormitories. That is the privilege of his seniors. He is not hardened enough to rag in form. He still regards work as important. I remember once seeing a very small and inoffensive scholar crumple up a sheet of paper and fling it at the head of his chemistry master. He

¹ It has even been known for a new boy to work in his spare time.

The New Boy

maintained, however, that he was aiming at the waste-paper basket, and, though the excuse was not accepted, the offender's subsequent performances on the cricket field have inclined me to think he spoke the truth. At any rate this is the sole piece of audacity on the part of a new boy that I have witnessed. Indeed the new boy who does not return home with a thundering good report is a well-placed candidate for expulsion. Most of us start well. How many public school boys would have to confess that they won their only prize in their first term. The new boy returns home as from a Roman triumph. The indulgent father is prodigal of largess and theatre-tickets. His secretary is instructed to type out the report and send copies of it to aunts and uncles and his former head master. It is a great occasion, and we do well to make the most of it. It does not come twice.

The change begins, I suppose, on the first evening of the second term, when the novice, clad appropriately in bowler hat and coloured tie, is accosted by a member of the form into which he has been promoted and informed that he will be expected to do the 'con' for them that term. There is no threat. It is merely the announcement of an arrangement for mutual help. The old stagers who have slowly moved up the school, with the danger of superannuation camping on their trail, consider that their last terms should pass in a soft tranquility. They expect the newcomer to provide them with that peace. 'Here,' they say, 'is a smart lad who has

Public School Life

got his promotion straight away; he can be of great service to us.' It is a form of practical communism of which the scholar is particularly the victim. There is a general conscription of intellect. Scholars are expected to do the work of the bloods. 'You are paid to come here,' say the great men, 'you must prove yourselves worthy of your hire.' Arnold Lunn has described how the captain of his house used to hold an educational raffle. Slips of paper on which were written: 'Greek Prose'; 'Latin Prose'; 'Essay,' were placed in a hat and the scholars took their chance of drawing a blank. I can still hear the voice of the school fast-bowler shouting over the banisters to a wretched goggle-eyed youth, 'No. 69, Becke, and shove it in my study before prayers.'

But the scholar is an exceptional person, and the novice who is accosted in the courts has an easier fate. He does not have to do other people's work. He merely has to do his own out loud. He is, moreover, a privileged person. He does not have to look the words up in a dictionary. That is the task of another member of the combination. He is spared the hack work of translation. It is for him to discover the sense. At a first glance it would seem that this arrangement would be to the advantage of the new boy; certainly it will ensure his industry. There is no chance of his scamping his work. The fate of others depends on his efficiency, and it does not pay him to guess at the sense. I remember once translating *Remotis arbitris, surrexit e lectulo*,

'having kicked off his bedclothes he rose from his bed.' No one questioned the interpretation, so I proceeded to the next sentence. None of us luckily was put on to translate that passage, but I can recall now the icy looks of the other members of the combination when the sentence was correctly rendered. I made a bolt for it afterwards, but they caught me. I did not guess again.

The form interpreter is never able to say to himself: 'I went on to con yesterday, and I went on the day before, there's not the least likelihood of my being put on to-day. I shan't prepare it.' He has to labour for the general good, and probably, by the end of the term, he knows the Latin and Greek books pretty well. But he has not only learnt the correct rendering of certain obscure classical passages; he has learnt also, through contact with older boys, the correct public school attitude to work and the relative importance of football and mathematics.

This is what he learns.

It is the business of the school to win their matches and to produce first-class footballers and cricketers; it is the business of the house to win their house matches and to produce as many colours as possible. It is the business of every individual member of the school to subscribe to this creed. The value of scholastic achievements is relative. It is a feather in the cap of a double first to be privileged to wear the dark blue ribbon of the Sixth. But it is not

Public School Life

a necessary achievement. Scholars, on the other hand, should work. They are no use to the school at games. It is for them to do what little lies within their power; a scholarship has its value. The school likes to get scholarships. It is a side show, of course, but a creditable side show. And the Fourth Former, after recounting the feats of Lewis in the big school match, comments on the fact that Bevan won a Balliol scholarship in the same way that the village greengrocer will say: 'Oh, yes, sir, we have a drapery department, too.' Real brains are accorded a sort of grudging admiration. They are entitled to respect. A Fellow has done his job well. It may not be an important job, but he has done it. Our Fourth Former remembers the parable of the talents. The Balliol scholar has converted his one talent into two.

The boy, however, who, without being a scholar, shows unusual signs of industry, is a swot. Valuable time is wasted. The school is divided into two parts: the scholars and the rest. The rest brings to its work whatever energy is saved from its more arduous activities. No one thinks any the less of a man for being low in form. Slackness on the football field is anti-social. In the long category of an unpopular boy's offence the final evidence of worthlessness is the statement: 'He doesn't even work.' Even that resort, 'that last infirmity,' is denied him. What purpose has his existence? These are the articles of faith; these are the conventions. And the new boy who is ambitious, who wishes

The New Boy

to win the respect and admiration of his comrades realises that athletic prowess will win him a position that is beyond the reach of the liveliest intellect. He begins to look on his work as a side show. It does not particularly matter what happens to him in the class-room. It would be nice to reach the Sixth. There are agreeable privileges. But it is not of first importance.

No sooner has he decided this, than he discovers that his form work is intolerably dull. Of course he does. He brings no enthusiasm to it. The masters who can inspire the indifferent are rare. And the mind wanders from the inky desks, the hunched row of shoulders, and the far voice of a master droning monotonously, to the swimming bath and the cricket field. Will Butler get the cricket cup? Did Frobisher get his firsts because he was worth them, or because he was in the Captain's house? These topics offer inviting prospects; speculation follows speculation till suddenly the tired voice breaks into the day-dream: 'Will you continue now, please, Dunkin?' There is a scuffle as Dunkin collects his books and thoughts. There is a whisper of: 'Where's the place?' 'What does *crates favorum* mean?' And the delinquent begins to stumble through his lines in a fashion that may, or may not, result in an imposition. To the unresponsive the atmosphere is one of intolerable listlessness.

He makes another discovery, namely, that during his first term he did far more work than was strictly necessary. That he should discover

Public School Life

the idiosyncracies of certain masters was a matter of course. Sooner or later he would have been bound to learn that in Old Mouldy's he could pin the repetition on to the back of the boy in front of him, that the Moke's mathematical class provided him with an admirable opportunity for writing the imposition that his house-master had given him the evening before. A good batsman soon sizes up the opposing fieldsmen; he knows whether he can risk a single to cover, or whether there is one for a throw when the ball goes slowly to third man. That is part of the game. The new boy makes more important discoveries than that. He comes to understand the intricacies of the set system by which the middle and upper schools learn French, German, Science, and Mathematics.

For the days have passed when a boy learnt only Latin and Greek and a little French grammar. A liberal education is supposed to give him a general idea of a wide number of subjects. A choice of subjects is allowed, and it is hard to arrange a fair system of marking that will bring the boy who does German into line with the boy who does Greek. Each school tackles the situation in a different way, but each system probably leaves a loophole for the idle. It could hardly be otherwise, and it is enough to describe one system and the tactics that are adopted to cope with it.

This particular system works as follows: It is accepted that the only universal subjects, that is, the only subjects that are studied by the

whole form under the same master, are Latin and English, and, under English, are to be included History, Literature, Geography, and Divinity. On the marks earned in these subjects the form order and promotion depends. All other subjects, Greek, German, French, Science, and Mathematics are treated independently of the form order and are taught in sets of varying standards. It would seem to be a very sound scheme. A boy, for instance, may be a bad historian and a poor classic, but a fine mathematician. If all subjects were included in the same order he would be kept back by his bad English and Latin and would have to do algebra that he had long outgrown, yet at the same time his mathematical ability would place him in a form where the English and classics would be too difficult for him. Under the set system it is possible for the boy to reach the highest set in the school at mathematics and yet remain in the Shell or Lower Fourth.

During his first term the new boy worked with equal industry at form and set subjects. During his second term he realises that he is wasting his energy. Proficiency in Greek will not help him to secure his promotion into the Lower Fifth; whereas, if he takes things easily at Greek, he will be able to spend more time on History and Latin. Indeed, it might be said that the wily one 'makes a book' in form and set subjects. He appreciates the need of reserve strength. He ought always to have a little in hand. He casts his eye down his time-table. There is no reason

Public School Life

why he should not spare himself during the hour in the laboratory. The time might be so much more profitably devoted to his Latin 'con'; and at the time, of course, he will not consider the possibility of allowing such an arrangement to divert in any way his classical activities in 'prep' on the previous night. Far from it. He will have an opportunity to revise. He again studies his time-table. French with 'Bogus.' A little relaxation there is possible. Greek with 'Crusoe,' however, presents difficulties. Crusoe is something of a martinet; he expects lessons to be prepared, and he has a way of remembering what impositions he has set. He will have to work hard for Crusoe. Indeed it would be as well if he tried an honest, or the equivalent for an honest term's work for Crusoe. Is not the next set conducted by the Moke on admirably communal grounds. In the Moke's every one helps every one. There is no haste, no envy, no striving for position. A few scholars hurry through on their way to Balliol scholarships. They do not matter. They are only ripples on the surface of that calm, deep pool.

Sometimes 'the book is made' the other way. A member of the school eleven has at last reached the Lower Fifth, and is content for a term or two to rest upon his achievements. He decides to do just enough work to avoid being bottled. He realises, however, that it will be as well for his father's peace of mind if a few single figures appear after his name in the report. And so he devotes himself to Chemistry and French.

The New Boy

Two subjects appear on the time-table for each evening's preparation. And it is a bad day when it is impossible to dismiss at least one of them in a quarter of an hour.

Examinations present difficulties. And it is here that the new boy, at the end of the summer term, makes his first serious compromise with the rigid code of ethics that he has brought with him from his Preparatory School. Why should he not crib in set subjects. They are unimportant. Promotion does not depend on them. He is not taking an unfair advantage of any one else. He will only do just well enough to avoid having to do the paper again. Why should he have to spend hours sweating up a useless subject. It is absurd. Besides, cribbing is rather an exciting game. It is a daring feat to smuggle the principal parts of the irregular verb, into a waistcoat pocket. It needs courage to open a French dictionary beneath the desk. He will be able to talk about it afterwards, and fellows will say he is a sport. It is the first step, and afterwards the compromise becomes increasingly easy.

He returns home at the end of his first year fortified with a deal of worldly wisdom. He looks forward to the next year hopefully. He knows where he is now. He has learnt the tricks of the trade. It is all going to be splendid fun.

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND YEAR

AND it is splendid fun. Let us make no mistake about that. It is splendid fun. For the ordinary boy, for all those, that is to say, who have not been designed by nature for the contemptuous entertainment of their companions, nothing is much better than the second and third years. It is a light-hearted, swash-buckling period. The anxieties of the fag have been forgotten, the responsibilities of the Sixth Former are still remote. The second yearer can rag, and his ragging is not taken seriously. At the end of the term house-masters do not address him solemnly and appeal to his better nature. They beat him, and that makes it a square fight. He knows where he is. He has to remain on the right side of the law. If he passes the limit, he knows what to expect. Later on the issue will be complicated by his position: for a while he can afford to be an irresponsible free-lance.

It is a happy time of eager unreflecting action. There is a good deal of noisiness and 'showing off.' But it is harmless. A boy has just begun to find himself. He is free at last. At his Preparatory School he was always under the eye of authority. His freedom was enmeshed by a network of regulations. His first year at his

The Second Year

Public School his freedom was fettered by nervousness and prejudice. That is over now. I sometimes think that we love Charlie Chaplin so dearly because he does all the things we have not the courage to do ourselves. When a waiter hurries past us with a pile of plates, how delightful it would be, we think, to drive our feet between his legs; who would not love to hurl a brick at a retreating foe; who is not tempted to crook his walking-stick round the ankles of the pompous. We never do these things; not as we should like to do them. But we come as near as we ever shall come to the attainment of this desire during our second year at school. On a small scale it is permitted us to destroy furniture. We can pull chairs from beneath an unsuspecting foe. The strings of a hammock have been cut to the discomfiture of the occupant. The terminal bill for breakages is often considerable, but no one is ever really hurt.

For what little bullying exists nowadays the second and third yearers are in the main responsible. The effect of a new-found freedom is intoxicating. And there is always a boy in every house who is an irresistible butt. There is a compound German word that means 'face-that-invites-a-box-on-the-ear.' And such a physiognomy is the invariable possession of at least one scholar; in its own way the magnetic influence of such ugliness is as irresistible as the charm of a pretty woman. One has only to see that particular brand of face to want to heave a boot at it. One refrains seldom. It used to be held that every

Public School Life

house contains one bully. It would be truer to say that every house contains one boy who is bullied. Most boys go through their school-days without being subjected to any bullying, but most boys indulge in a little spasmodic bullying themselves. It is a sort of bull baiting, and it is in the main good-natured.

Four or five fellows are sitting in a study after tea. There are still twenty minutes before lock-up, and the conversation has grown desultory. They all feel a little bored. One of them suggests that they should go and see how that ass 'Sniffy' is getting on. It is a popular suggestion, and a raid is made upon Sniffy's study. Sniffy is discovered working. This is considered to be a disgrace to the house, and Sniffy is informed of the fact. He invites his guests to get out. 'But, my dear Sniffy, what hospitality! Surely you are going to offer us a chair! No? Then we must teach you manners!' Sniffy's chair is suddenly jerked from under him and Sniffy is flung forward on to his table. He jumps up and lets fly at one of his assailants. It is no fun ragging some one who does not retaliate, and proceedings are soon less cordial. In the end Sniffy's study is pretty effectively wrecked. This happens about once a fortnight, but, beyond this, I am inclined to think that, except in a bad house, there is very little bullying now in Public Schools.

The tone of a house changes far more quickly than the tone of a school. And, in every school, there is usually a thoroughly bad house. As a

house-master grows old he tends to leave the management of the house more and more in the hands of his prefects. As long as his prefects are efficient all goes well; but, sooner or later, a weak head is bound to come, and then the swash-buckling element gets out of hand. One of the houses when I first went to school had got into this state. The head boy was easy-going, and there were in the day room two members of the First Fifteen who had in school failed to reach the Lower Fourth and who were thorough 'wrong 'uns.' Terrible tales of refined torture used to be repeated in the upper dormitories, and I can well believe that life there was pretty wretched. But I always distrust second-hand accounts. Nothing is more easily distorted than the story of atrocities, and, for my part, I have neither been a victim, nor the witness of any serious bullying. The only case that reached official notice during my time savoured strongly of the ludicrous.

A parent had complained that his son had been ill-treated, and all the house prefects were summoned into the head master's presence. The offenders were leaning nervously against the wall; their victim was enduring tortures of self-consciousness; the head master was fingering his pen, and the avenging father blocked up the entire fireplace. There was a dead silence. We were all hard put to it not to smile. The offenders looked so much smaller than the prey. At last proceedings were opened by the boy's parent. He followed the traditional line. He had been

Public School Life

a boy. He knew what boys were. He knew the public school code of honour. He loathed sneaking. His boy had not sneaked. The confession had been dragged out of him. What he, the father, wanted, was not punishment, but the assurance that such a thing would not happen again. 'And now, John,' he concluded, 'show the head master that bruise upon your arm.' Very sheepishly the boy drew off his coat, rolled up his sleeve and revealed a bruise, certainly of extensive proportions.

'How did they do that?' asked the chief.

'By flicking him with wet towels, head master,' said the parent.

A simultaneous denial came from both offenders. 'We didn't make that bruise, sir.'

'But did you flick him?' asked the chief.

'Well, sir; yes.'

'Then how on earth can you tell that you did not make that bruise?'

There was a moment's silence, during which the smaller of the offenders surveyed the wound with an almost envious eye.

'It couldn't have been me, sir,' he said at last. 'I can't flick well enough to have done that.'

I hope I may be pardoned for retelling this story, which I have already told elsewhere. But it seems to me to interpret perfectly the attitude towards bullying that exists in most houses. No doubt there was a great deal of bullying fifty years ago. And people think that what was true of the Rugby of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* is true

of the Shrewsbury of to-day. They still think that the three chief sins of a Public School are bullying, stealing, and midnight escapades into the town. But those days have passed. In Desmond Coke's *The Bending of a Twig* the new boy who sought for bullies behind every cloister quickly won the nickname of Don Q.

It is usually during the course of his fourth term that a boy first begins to swear. For swearing is, on the whole, confined to members of the Middle School. It is side for a fag to swear, and an oath, except on rare occasions, is considered beneath the dignity of a blood. He is supposed to dwell in an Olympian fastness beyond the reach of inconvenience, where the need for violent language is infrequently presented. For the second yearer, however, life is full of emotion that demands to be registered forcibly.

I can never quite see why so many people refuse to believe that a schoolboy's conversation is punctuated with 'damns' and 'bloodys.' We employ the idiom of our surroundings. A boy does not swear at home; at school he does. And there is no particular reason why he should not. An oath means little to him. He knows that some indecency is implied. But the meaning of the word is not defined by his use of it. He rarely employs it appropriately. He recommends the most contradictory performances. A powerful expression is needed. He wishes the world to know that he has been moved powerfully either to anger, or to delight. That is all. Any word

Public School Life

that would have this effect would suit him, and I remember a dormitory captain insisting that the only expletive to be used in his presence should be 'daggers'; this crasis satisfied every one. The language a boy uses is no index to his character. Swearing and 'talking smut' are very different things.

It is also in his fourth term that a boy who is anything of an athlete begins to discover himself on the football field. He finds himself scoring tries in house games. He is noticed by the bloods as a coming man. He makes friends among his seniors. He is no longer outside the life of the school. The road of ambition lies clear and straight before him. It is marked out in distinct stages. He learnt, of course, during his first term that a house cap may put one hand in his trouser pockets, that a seconds may put both, that a first may walk across the sixth form green in break; but these facts were distant in the imagination like the ritual of a mediæval court: they now become realities. In a year, he reminds himself, he will be in his house fifteen. The year after he should get his house cap. In four years he should be a first. It might, indeed, be maintained that the blood system is at the same time the magnet and the expression of the second yearer's ambition. The blood would not value his performances so highly were he not encouraged by others in the belief that he is of supreme importance. And, at fifteen, one idealises the future. It seems splendid to be a blood, to play for the school

The Second Year

against Blackheath, to saunter across the courts with one's hands in one's pockets, one's books stuck under one's arms; to be on terms of friendly intercourse with masters, to be beyond the reach of punishment. And, because the future seems so glorious, the second yearer idealises the dwellers in it. In the same way that in Chelsea the latest poet or draughtsman can disregard the social laws of property and of propriety, in the eyes of the junior the blood can do no wrong. His voice is hushed when a blood passes him in the cloisters. If one should speak to him, he blushes and stammers and feels proud of it for days. The blood naturally endeavours to realise the popular conception of himself. He owes his position to it. For the higher up the school we go, the less important the blood appears, and, when our time comes to sit at the high table, we can hardly believe that we are occupying the same chair that Meredith sat in four years ago. It is absurd. How the house must have come down. To think of that little ass, Barton, being a prefect. How short a time since he was playing in junior house games and getting cursed for funk. And for ourselves—it is only yesterday that we were trembling, a diffident new boy, at the far corner of the day-room table. We cannot but believe our generation to be vastly inferior to those that have preceded it, and we do not think otherwise even when we win the senior cricket cup, although in Meredith's year the house was beaten by an innings in the first round. It is not in our nature

to desire, or even value highly, what we possess. The last year is often a disappointment.

No such foreknowledge mars the enjoyment and anticipation of the second yearer. It is indeed hard to imagine a more fortunate combination of circumstances. From an agreeable present he surveys the prospect of a delightful future. The days may pass slowly, or swiftly, as they will—their passage will be a long enchantment.

It is during this period that a boy gets through the majority of his ragging in form. Now the ragging of masters is a very specialised art. The master holds all the cards. He has behind him the marshalled forces of the law. He can cane, he can give lines. He has every implement, physical and moral, for the preservation of order. He ought to be able to keep order. Yet the boy usually wins. Indeed, I often wonder how a master, who has once begun to be ragged, can ever hope to regain order. He is fighting a confident foe. The new boy learns during his first week that 'one can do anything one likes in Musty's.' Musty stands no chance. He enters the form room nervously; he is on the lookout for trouble; he is afraid to turn his back on the class when he is working on the blackboard. For ten minutes there is silence, a suspicious silence, perhaps, but still a silence. Musty tells himself that if any one attempts to break that silence he will make him sorry for it. He will punish the first whisper: that is the only way. And then, suddenly, from the back

of the room, comes an ominous sound. It is not a cough: it is not a sneeze: it is a hideous nasal and vocal croak that Musty has learnt to recognise as the prelude to rebellion. He observes that some one is cramming a handkerchief into his mouth, and is choking in the subdued manner of one who is unsuccessfully stifling a laugh.

Musty decides on action. 'Jones, take that handkerchief out of your mouth immediately, and you'll spend the afternoon doing me a hundred lines.' Jones withdraws the handkerchief from his chin, and his face assumes an expression of outraged innocence. 'But, sir——' he begins.

'A hundred and fifty lines,' snaps Musty.

At this point the democracy of the class feels that its independence has been violated. There is a murmur of disapproval. And a tall, cadaverous youth rises from the front desk.

'Please, sir——'

'Silence, Evans.'

'No, sir, but really,' Evans persists, 'I must explain to you, sir, that the younger Jones is suffering from a very severe cold.'

'Yes, sir, I am,' blurts out the victim. 'And the matron said I was not to play football this afternoon.'

At this point Musty should, of course, be firm.

'I am sorry,' he should say, 'but, at the same time, that will allow you, Jones, to do me two hundred lines instead of a hundred and fifty. And perhaps you, Evans, will do me a hundred

Public School Life

and fifty. 'Thank you. We will now proceed with the lesson.'

Such tactics might succeed. But Musty hesitates; for a moment he wonders whether Jones is telling him the truth. And the delay is fatal. Already other members have started to produce testimonials to Jones mi.'s integrity and disease. 'He really is awfully bad, sir. My study's next door to him, and he was coughing all last night. He made such a noise that I was only able to do you three problems instead of six!'

A general conversation begins. Members cease even to address the chair. When Evans assures Musty that 'Jones would never tell a lie,' Power retorts that the other day Jones sold him a watch as new which went smash at once. 'Dirty little liar, I call him!' 'You wait till afterwards,' is Jones's reply. And, by the time honour has been vindicated, there is no chance of restoring order that day. The class is already out of hand. Jones mi. has the general permission to sneeze as often as he likes, a permission of which he generously avails himself.

Such a disturbance should have been quelled by a firm hand. Masters have to run the risk of being unfair. There is, of course, the possibility that Jones's cold may have been genuine, but his previous record should preclude it to a 100 to 1 chance. At any rate, it is unlikely that Jones would be anxious to carry the case to the head master. Criminals avoid Bow Street.

It is not usually, however, so easy to distinguish

The Second Year

the preliminary manœuvres. When, for instance, a boy walks quickly up to the master's desk and says that he thinks there is a peculiar smell in the room, the master is taken off his guard. He assumes interest. He walks to where the boy was sitting and sniffs. A polite boy rises and asks respectfully if anything is the matter. 'No, nothing,' says the master, 'Jones thought there was a curious smell where he was sitting.' The interest of the form is quickened. There is a general sound of sniffing. 'Well, sir, now that Jones comes to mention it, I do seem to recognise—I don't quite know what it is, sir.'

'Come, come,' says the master, 'that'll do.'

'No, but really, sir, I don't know if it's quite healthy. Do you think the drains are all right?'

The information is hazarded that there have been several cases of typhoid recently in the town.

'It must be the drains.'

Then some one suggests that it may be the gas. The school custos is notoriously careless in these matters. The suggestion is welcomed. At any rate it deserves investigation. And such investigations, when conducted by twenty clumsy boys, whose clumsy feet are shod with heavy boots, are a long and noisy business. Books fall with a clatter on to the floor. The hindquarters of the inoffensive are accidentally kicked. Smith endeavours to jump from one desk to another, misses his footing and crashes on the desk. Musty is lost.

He stands in the middle of the room. He says

Public School Life

'Come, now!' a great many times. He varies it occasionally with 'That'll do.' He asks Smith whether he considers that what he is doing 'is really necessary.' At last a piping unrecognisable voice rises from the far corner. 'It isn't the gas. It must be Musty himself. He never washes.'

In most schools there are at least two masters who are the continual victims of such treatment. Such ragging, however, is too simple to content the truly adventurous. The Mustys of the scholastic world are objects of contempt, and we prefer to respect our enemies. It is far more entertaining to rag a disciplinarian. One has to guard oneself. The master has all the weapons. Among other things the ragster has to work. If he is unexpectedly put on to con, flounders through a couple of lines and breaks down completely at the third, he has played into his opponent's hand. He has deserved the imposition that he will most certainly get. The ragster must prepare his work. That is part of his defence. He cannot say to himself: 'I have been on twice running. I shall not go on to-day.' If he makes a cheeky remark in form, the master's just retort is: 'Jones, you seem to like talking. I think you had better translate the next passage.' And, if Jones translates the passage successfully he feels that he is one up. Such ragging is very different from the general rag of the complete incompetent. It is a free-lance affair. It is an art. The majority of masters meet it in some form or other. It is

The Second Year

only a few who are subjected to displays in which the whole form take part.

Yet it is a puzzle to find out how exactly this ill-fortune selects its particular victims. Personality is limited. There are only a few who have a real genius for teaching. The majority are merely competent. And competence must fall before invention. Why is it that some are ragged and others not. The ragged master may be an excellent fellow. He may be good at games; he may be just as exemplary a member of society as his colleagues, and yet he is selected for this refined torture. There are some masters for whom one never works hard; one does enough and no more to avoid being bottled. One sits in the class-room for long, sultry, tedious hours; the insipid sunlight moves across the wall. One watches a fly crawl up the window-pane. One writes 'is a fool' upon the desk after the inscribed name of an enemy. One sticks a compass into the back of the man in front. Perhaps one revises the next hour's lesson. It may be that there is an imposition to be completed. The minutes pass slowly; one longs for the strike of the clock. And yet no one attempts to enliven the hour with some geniality. The few attempts that are made are spasmodic and unsuccessful.

We had a master who was nicknamed, I never knew why, *Marchand*. And, one day, a boy who was doing translation paused at the French word *marchand*. 'Please, sir,' he said, 'I don't know what *marchand* means.' There was no laugh, not even a titter. We were all too

Public School Life

surprised. The master's face did not alter. 'It means merchant, Smith,' he said, 'and you will stay behind afterwards and speak to me.' He received six of the best. And it was, no doubt, such a master who made the historic retort to the boy who, during an hour that was devoted to the discussion of Old Testament history, inquired what 'harlot' meant. 'A harlot, Jones,' the master answered, 'is a lady who finds herself in unfortunate circumstances, and you will take two hundred lines.'

If such an answer had been made by Musty, the boy would have expostulated freely; other members of the form would have interested themselves in the cause of justice. As it is, Smith gets his half-dozen and Jones his two hundred lines, and the world says 'silly ass!'

There are certain masters who inspire neither industry nor insubordination, and yet I suppose that once they, too, had their hour of trial. So much depends on the first impression. Arnold Lunn has recounted in *The Harrovians* the story of one Crabbe, who was so unmercifully ragged that he had to leave at the end of his first term. 'He went on to another school where his reputation had not preceded him. He opened his first lesson by setting a boy a hundred lines for sneezing. After having successfully established a reputation for unbridled ferocity, he was able, by slow degrees, to relapse into his natural kindly self.' It is typical of much. The master who has once allowed himself to be ragged is lost for ever. He may beat, he may line, he will

The Second Year

never restore order. His only chance is to try elsewhere.

The ragging of prefects is of very much the same order. There is less of it, because the head of the house has a way of jumping suddenly on the turbulent. 'I hear you were ragging Beetle last night in hall. You've got to stop it—see? and you're going to get six as a warning!' The head of the house has more authority than an assistant master. If a boy felt that an assistant master was unjust he might very well complain to the head master. But no boy would care to appeal against a boy—that would be sneaking. A good head of the house sees to it that none of the prefects are indiscriminately ragged, but there is always one of them for whom the rest of the house has but little respect, and to whom the taking of prep is always an anxiety. He beats and lines more than the rest of the prefects put together. But it has small effect. Indeed the second yearer acquires a hardened hide. Punishment is no deterrent to him; it is merely a pawn in the game.

CHAPTER V

ATHLETICISM

By this time the new boy may be truly said to have reached the inner circle of a public school philosophy. He knows to what gods he must bow the knee. And he serves dutifully before the altar of the god of sport.

The cult of athleticism has been for a long while the target at which the enemies of the Public School have launched their abuse. And until this cult is understood, it is impossible to understand the standards and the scale of values of a Public School. Every community must have a religion of sorts, a faith to which all faiths are subservient, a service which makes the first demands. A man, when called to decide between two claims, must be able to know which way his duty lies. He may not follow the claim of duty, but he should be able to distinguish which it is. In some communities it is the observance of social custom, in another the making of money is all important, in one the honour of the regiment, in a second the teaching of the Scriptures. At a Public School it is athletic prominence.

The position of a school is decided by its performances on the field. If two men in a club are discussing the merits of a certain school,

the first consideration will be athletics. 'Oh, yes,' they will say. 'Fernhurst stands very well just now. It beat Tonford and Merton last season, and it's got two fellows in the Varsity eleven.' The social status of a school is judged, not by the number of Balliol scholars it has produced, but by the quality of the schools it plays. 'Oh, Marestone can't be much of a place,' you will hear said. 'They only play a few grammar schools.'

This fact the new boy realises at once. His father's friends are impressed when he can tell them that his school has beaten Haileybury. They display a mild interest at his casual reference to Bennett's scholarship: The new boy reads in the daily papers enthusiastic articles on the performances of the school eleven, and he learns that Haslett is being watched by the county authorities. There is an air of publicity about every school match. There will be reports in the newspapers. The new boy feels himself to be participating in a function of considerable general interest. All over the country people will be wondering what will chance in this particular encounter. He is on the spot. The Press accentuates his keenness. How could he, in the face of such a testimony, doubt the supreme importance of athletics. We believe in the goods that are most widely advertised. Who ever read an article on the prospects of the various competitors for a certain exam. Who has read in the *Times* that 'enormous interest is being taken in the approaching scholarship examinations.

Public School Life

Clifton has several promising scholars. Marston may be poor at unseen, but he is very deft in his handling of Latin prose, and he has a good ear for hexameters. Haileybury, on the other hand, place their faith in Johnson, a steady, industrious worker who can be trusted to perform consistently in all subjects. . . . Yet, two or three times a week, we can read in the *Sportsman* that Fernhurst has a vastly improved side and that with Evans back again in the three-quarter line, is hopeful of emerging triumphantly from the approaching contest with Tonford.

Public School sport is awarded at the present moment a preposterous amount of publicity. It is bad for the schools; it is bad for the boys themselves, and, as far as one can gather, it has not helped English sport to any appreciable degree. It encourages in schools the belief that games matter more than anything else. Very often it makes boys swelled-headed, certainly it makes them think they are bigger than they are, and is preparing for them a big disappointment. It is so easy to appear a giant among pigmies. In my own short experience I can remember more than one player who was described while at school as being an England batsman in the making, and who now experiences a difficulty in getting into the county side. Every summer we know by name a whole host of public school cricketers that are never heard of afterwards. They have averages of sixty during their last term; their exploits are described in fervid journalese. They go up to Oxford, fail to reach

double figures in the Freshmen's match, and are quickly submerged in college cricket. Others go up with enormous reputations, making centuries in the trial match, and then find that there is a difference between club and county cricket. They just get their blue with a batting average of twenty-five; they play for the county during August and do nothing exceptional. They are just average cricketers, useful members of a side and nothing more. In the meanwhile the journalists are shrieking of the natural offbreak of a sixteen-year-old Rugbeian. This particular type of writer resembles the literary critic who hails every new poet as a 'second Keats,' and every new novelist as 'a second Hardy,' but loses interest in his discoveries after the appearance of their fourth book.

There is no need to dive back into past history. We can find enough examples in post-war cricket. N. E. Partridge in 1919 had a batting average of 43, and took 71 wickets for under 12 runs each. He had a magnificent press. Next to Stevens, and perhaps Hedges, he was the most discussed boy cricketer of the year. On the strength of this boosting he very nearly received an invitation to play for the Gentlemen at Lords. As a matter of fact, I am not certain that he did not actually receive an invitation, and that his head master refused to let him go—but on that point I am not certain. At any rate his claims were seriously advanced by a great many reputable judges of the game, among whom I think Sydney Pardon has to be included. He went up to

Public School Life

Cambridge with a tremendous reputation; he did only moderately. At one time, indeed, it seemed improbable that he would get his blue. Last season he did nothing exceptional for Warwickshire. I may, of course, be misjudging a cricketer whom I have never seen play, but everything would seem to suggest that Partidge will develop into nothing more exciting than the average county cricketer.¹

We could also take the example of L. P. Hedges. I spent the summer of 1918 in a German prison camp; but even to that distant city came news of the brilliant Tonbridge batsman who was greater even than Hutchings. During the summer of 1919 the assiduous student of the *Sportsman* heard much of him. Every week appeared the score of some fresh triumph, and, to crown it all, came that brilliant 163 at Lords. It was a gorgeous show. I was thankful not to be fielding at coverpoint. But, let it be whispered gently, the bowling did not look particularly difficult, and, though Hedges's innings was dazzling, a quite ordinary batsman should, off the same bowling, have been able to help himself to a generous allowance of fours.

That particular innings marked, I suppose, the height of Hedges's career from the point of view of press publicity and popular esteem; the height had been reached, that is to say, before his qualities had been placed on the open

¹ The proofs of this book were corrected in April. Should anything unforeseen chance during the cricket season, before its appearance, I can only plead the fallibility of the prophet.

market and tested by the stress of three days' cricket and the accuracy of professional bowling. We do not hear much of Hedges nowadays. He has played useful cricket for Oxford and for Kent; but he has done nothing sensational. And yet, when I saw him last summer make a 50 against Middlesex at Lords, I could not help feeling that he is a better bat to-day than he was in 1919, and that that 50 in an important match, against confident bowling, and while Woolley was scratching uncomfortably at the over end, was in every way a finer performance than his 163 of two years earlier. He drove Haig and Durston through the covers as easily as in 1919 he had plastered the ring with boundaries. And yet the pressmen remained calm.

It is vain and it is unfair to attempt to form a judgment of a person whose wares are not upon the open market. No one can tell who is, and who is not, going to prove a test match cricketer. Equally it is impossible to tell from public school form which boys are potential cricketers. Who, for example, who saw in 1910 F. H. Knott and D. J. Knight batting in the Public School's match at Lords realised that Knight was going to develop into an incomparably greater batsman than Knott. And yet sportsmen continue to write about boy cricketers with the seriousness that they devote to Hobbs. They draw the most ridiculous comparisons. I discovered last summer in one of the most influential daily papers the following passage in the account of the Public

Public School Life

School's match at Lords: 'There is probably no cricketer, with the exception of R. H. Spooner, who sees the ball more quickly than J. L. Guise.' Now anything much more ridiculous I can hardly imagine. It is like the literary critic, who shall be nameless, who described the work of a minor poet, who shall be also nameless, as having given him more pleasure than anything since the first flights of Swinburne. It is preposterous to speak of Guise, who is an extremely promising cricketer, as seeing the ball more quickly than any batsman except Spooner. It all depends on what manner of ball he is seeing. In the Eton match he, no doubt, saw Allen's deliveries with considerable speed. Spooner, however, was in the habit of seeing in this manner the deliveries of Cotter, Tarrant, and Schwarz. Speed of eye is relative to the quality of the bowling. I should hesitate to call myself a batsman, but there is a type of ball that I can see with incredible rapidity. It is bowled to me, alas, too occasionally, in village matches. It is medium paced, it pitches on the middle stump, a little more than half-way down the pitch, and it turns away ever so slightly towards the leg. Any one can look a good bat who is opposed to bad bowling. And I maintain that it is no sort of sense indulging in wild panegyrics about schoolboys who have never been tested by first-class bowling.

If a boy seems promising the county authorities should give him a trial, and, if he does well, then let the pressmen get busy. Every one is

so terrified lest a good man may be overlooked. But how unlikely that is if the county authorities are at all keen. Trial matches can be arranged. Visits can be paid to schools. There is no need for this hectic discovery of twenty Spooners every season. The school figures of players like Stevens and Chapman and Hubert Ashton would have been quite sufficient to ensure a proper trial for them. And the fact remains that in spite of this press work amateur cricket is at a lower ebb now than it has ever been before. The Gentlemen and Players match has become too one-sided to stimulate interest in anything save individual performances. Very few amateurs are good enough to play for England. Douglas is; and he was not one of the marked men of cricket articles. His entrance was as untheatrical as his batting. D. J. Knight, is on his form of 1919, the second best batsman in the country; Stevens, at his best, is a great match-winning factor; Tennyson and Fender are useful players. But it is impossible to maintain that there are to-day any amateur batsmen comparable with Maclaren, Spooner, Fry, Stoddart, and Jackson, than the cricketers, that is to say, who passed unheralded on their merits into first-class cricket. The low standard of amateur cricket cannot be argued away. And this trumpeting of the press could only be excused, could it be proved to further the interests of amateur sport in England. Instead of furthering those interests, it works against them. It makes games at a Public School too much of a business and too

Public School Life

little of a sport. It introduces professionalism. And I am prepared to wonder how far one really enjoys one's games at school.

One is frightfully excited about them; one is very pleased when one does well and depressed if one does badly. One works oneself into a state of nervous misery before a match, and one of hysterical excitement after it. Victory and defeat mean a great deal. And it was with a real surprise that I realised a few months ago at the end of a very pleasant season that, although I should continue to play football for another ten years, and cricket, I hope, for another forty, I should never again really care whether the side for which I am playing wins or loses—care, that is to say, as I cared at school about a house match. In club cricket and football one asks for a good game in pleasant company, and victory is incidental. While one is playing, of course, one is keen, but one will not brood afterwards over one's mistakes,—not as one does after a school match. There is, I suppose, no public school man under the sun who does not now and again on some winter evening drop his paper on his knees and curse himself because, fifteen years ago, he missed a catch at an important crisis—that is one of the things one never ceases to regret. That awful moment when one picks up the ball with tingling fingers and tosses it back to the bowler; it is for all time a vivid memory. One does not feel like that about an ordinary catch in an ordinary club game. One is annoyed with oneself; one is sorry for the

bowler; one apologises to the captain, but one remembers that one is out, after all, to enjoy oneself.

That is the difference between school and club cricket. At school one is not out to enjoy oneself. It is a business, this getting of runs and taking of wickets. There are cups for house matches, and there are cups for batting and bowling averages, and it is a sin to miss a catch. There are few worse things than the anxiety attendant on those who play on the fringe of a school side. Not only is one worried about one's own performances, but about one's rivals. If one has made a duck oneself one cannot, in spite of one's patriotism, be anxious for a particular rival to retrieve the fortunes of the side with a century. A first eleven cap is valued far too highly for such unselfishness. It is equally little fun to be a member of a bad fifteen. One is subjected to a series of complaints and recriminations. One grows sick of the whole business. And I can remember during the first winter of the war the relief with which we learnt that the Tonbridge match had been scratched. We had a poor side. We knew that we should be thoroughly trounced, and that, for the next week, the lives of those who had not distinguished themselves would be made wretched. We never for a moment questioned the justice of this tyranny. The Lord our God was a jealous God. We had to serve him. But we were not sorry that an occasion for his wrath should be removed. I very much doubt whether the actual playing

Public School Life

of games was as pleasant at school as it is outside it.

The intensity and rapture are irrecoverable. There is nothing to compare with the elation that follows a victory over a stronger side. But in the long run I find cricket more enjoyable to-day than I did six years ago. It is less complicated. One takes a day off from one's work and spends it in agreeable company. One can field out all day and never take a wicket, miss a couple of catches, and then crown everything by making a duck, and yet thoroughly enjoy oneself. At school that would have been a rotten day, and one would have spent the evening in deep despondency. Yet everything is in favour of one enjoying one's game at school. It is so simple. One strolls down after lunch in a leisurely fashion to the field. One changes one's boots in the pavilion. A hot bath is waiting for one afterwards. But, in order to play football after one has left, one has to rush off to catch impossible trains from impossible stations. One has no time for lunch. The train always seems to start at 1.18. There is as likely as not a long walk from the station. One changes in a converted army hut; one is more than a little tired before the game starts. There are no proper baths afterwards, and one has to hurry, or one will miss the only train to town: for it is amazing the number of football fields which are on loop lines with trains at hourly intervals. And yet, personally, I enjoy my football now a great deal more than I ever did at school.

It would not be just, however, to lay the blame of this professionalism to the account of the sporting press. Journalists are rarely responsible for anything. They do not lead public opinion. They follow it or, if they are clever, they anticipate it. Had not the worship of athleticism been already firmly established in the schools themselves it would never have occurred to them to run it as a stunt. The journalist spends most of his time searching for a town of blind men over which he, with his one eye, may rule. And the journalist discovered that the Public School had enthroned an unofficial king who had not received his due of public recognition. The journalist decided to officialise his position. To this king was paid extensive homage; and, as there is no more pleasant reading for ladies-in-waiting than court gossip, he commenced a column of court news. But he did not set up the court, or crown the king. He is only a herald. And we must regard these tiresome articles as a proof, but not a cause of this peculiar ritual. The trumpeting of the herald adds certainly to the glamour of the court, but his absence would not start a revolution. If not another article appeared on public school sport, the cult of athleticism would still continue; it would continue because as things are at present there is no other focus for the enthusiasm and partisanship of a boy of seventeen. There is really little else about which a schoolboy could reasonably become excited.

Indeed it is hard to see what other results

Public School Life

could have been expected from such a combination of circumstances. Four hundred boys are divided into ten houses. They are encouraged to feel an intense loyalty for their house and for their school. They are told that it is up to them to make their house the best house in the school, and their school the best school in the country. They set out in all good faith to accomplish their task. In what, they ask themselves, does the goodness of a house consist. It is not much sense to speak to them of the moral tone of a house or school. They desire a tangible manifestation of virtue, 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.' And the only available outward and visible sign is the row of silver challenge cups on the dining-hall mantelpiece. It is natural to assume that the house which has the most cups is the best house; a school can only prove its superiority over another school by victory on the football field. Scholarships are an indirect form of competition. For the best boys from one school may not come into touch with the best boys of another. But a victory by 30 points is a direct statement of a fact. The victorious school is superior to the defeated school. It is in athletic contests alone that a house or school can express a united will, can become indeed one person. The loyalty of a boy for his house or school is a fine thing, but it renders athletic worship almost inevitable. Were there not this intense house and school feeling individual boys would cultivate their individual tastes; forty boys would be grouped

88

together for convenience of boarding—that is all a house would be. But as soon as a boy comes to regard himself as a member of a fine community, he feels a natural pride and loyalty in its performances and in its welfare. There is no other focus for partisanship: form work is uninteresting. Boxing, fives, the corps, and the gymnasium are side shows. Cricket and football are what count. A boy must have a religion of sorts. He must have some ideal to which the demands of his own temperament may become subservient.

On this worship of games is based the scale of social values. The ethics of cribbing, for example, are based entirely on the assumption that a success in form is of inconsiderable importance; it is permissible for a boy to crib in order to save his energies for worthier causes. The blood system is built on an intense admiration for those who are upholding the honour of the house, and is an expression of the small boy's longing to reach such a position himself. The attitude to morality on the part of masters is intimately connected with athletics, and on the boy's part, the belief that a member of a school side is, *ipso facto*, an invaluable asset to the school, allows the blood to do very much what he likes; as long, in fact, as a boy can satisfy his companions and himself that he is exerting all his power on the football field, he can amuse himself in other ways as he thinks fit.

There is no other criterion for a boy's worthiness, or unworthiness, as a member of a house,

Public School Life

and the half-bloods consider that a very big responsibility has descended on them. They have to keep the house up to the mark. The big men cannot bother themselves about individuals. But the half-bloods who are, as it were, emissaries between heaven and earth, can investigate closely the behaviour of the coming generation. They can notice who is showing signs of slackness. They individually give themselves enormous airs. They form a sort of improvement society.

I remember that, in the course of one term, our house lost every challenge cup that it had possessed. This was considered a disgrace. And several of us decided that it was for us to reform the house. We did not consider ourselves to stand in any need of improvement. But we used to wander round the studies between tea and hall inquisitioning fags and scholars, asking them what use they thought they were to house or school, and informing them that they would be well advised to make more strenuous efforts. It was, I suppose, a form of bullying; or rather perhaps an aid to vanity. What we really needed was for some one to kick us hard. No one did, however. It seemed to occur to no one else, any more than it did to us, that there were objects of a public school education other than the acquiring of caps and cups. You might as well expect an Indian priest to doubt the omnipotence of Buddha.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRUE ETHICS OF CRIBBING

THE boy who thus exhausts in ragging the residue of energy that the football field allows him, has, it follows, to be careful not to burn the candle at both ends. He has to spare himself, and to spare himself he abandons the spasmodic cribbing of his first year's summer examination for sustained, systematic methods. Now the true ethics of this subject are as little understood as those relating to any other sphere of public school life. Cribbing is generally regarded as a dishonest practice to which only the ignoble few have regular resort. The habitual cribber is as morally lost as a thief. For what, after all, is cribbing, say our aunts, but the stealing of marks from your companions. 'When you crib,' they tell us, 'and say that you are not stealing, you argue from the standpoint of the housemaid who would return conscientiously the sixpence you have left on your dressing-table, but would not think twice of filling a medicine bottle with your best brandy and handing it over to her young man.' While we are at our Preparatory Schools we are inclined to agree with this. We ourselves would never think of cribbing. At a Preparatory School it is not done. But at a Public School we learn otherwise. To the public

Public School Life

school boy cribbing is not dishonest. It is not wrong, because it is not anti-social. There are no doubt somewhere, if we could discover them, fixed immutable standards of righteousness. But we have not found them yet. In the meantime we are content to frame conventions that alter with each generation to safeguard what we consider to be our comfort. We put a thief in prison because we are anxious to protect our property. His actions are anti-social. They are only anti-social, however, because we happen to value our property. We should not object if he took from us what we did not prize. It is thus indeed that the dustman earns his living. And the public school boy does not usually set much greater value on his marks than the housewife on her egg-shells.

I remember reading several years ago a short story that appeared in *The Captain*. It was about an American who came to an English Public School. On the result of a certain examination depended the position of head boy in the house, and the American broke into the head master's study and extracted the examination paper. The theft was, however, discovered, and the American summoned to the head master's study for an interview that was the certain prelude to expulsion. This fact was made known to him. 'Waal,' he said, 'I guess that's fair. My father often said to me when a big bluff fails, it's down and out for the guy that misses.' The head master was surprised. He appreciated the difference between a big bluff and a piece of

The True Ethics of Cribbing

calculated deceit. He saw that the American had, because of the atmosphere of business in which he had been brought up, a standard different from his own. The American had honestly believed himself to be attempting 'a big bluff.'

Now, in the world at large, ignorance of the law is no excuse. If it were, law court procedure would be infinitely complex. At school, however, the intention matters more than the result. The means are set before the end. The head master in the story realised that the American's offence was actually far less serious than it appeared, and the American was not expelled.

In this case, of course, the theft of the examination paper was definitely anti-social. It was a real theft. The American was endeavouring to acquire a position that others valued through means not at the disposal of his competitors. But this story, which appeared in a paper the moral tone of which has necessarily to be above suspicion, establishes officially the principle that the seriousness of an offence depends largely on the attitude adopted to it by the offender. And therein lie the true ethics of cribbing. What public opinion approves cannot be anti-social. Only a few recognise the distinction between the immoral and the anti-social. And public opinion is, on the whole, inclined to condone cribbing.

Every boy is anxious to be a power in his house; he wants to be a prefect, he looks forward to the day when he will be safe from authority, will be, indeed, authority itself. But he knows that, without unduly exerting himself in the

Public School Life

class-room, he will be able to achieve prominence through success at football. A house cap has to sit at the Va table: as a second, probably, and certainly as a first, he will be raised to the dignity of the dais; thence the process of seniority will carry him quickly to his prefectship. It is assumed that by that time the same process of seniority will have carried him to the Upper Fifth. (It is hard to avoid being promoted once a year.) The hours spent in the class-room are a dull setting for the vivid hues of the life that lies outside it. Occasionally the setting is relieved by a bright patch of colour—an ingenious rag, a successful piece of cribbing—but, on the whole, it is dull and monotonous. A boy works spasmodically, sometimes to get a promotion, sometimes to secure the good-will of a master he admires, sometimes to reach a form where it will be only rarely necessary for him to prepare his work. And he cribs more or less consistently out of laziness, to avoid being bottled, to save himself trouble, to be able to devote as much of his evening as is possible to more sympathetic forms of employment. He does not consider he is doing anything wrong. He knows that, if he is caught, he will be punished. But then he sees the relationship of boys and masters as a long, intermittent struggle, a game played in good faith, with fixed rewards and penalties. He does not expect his conduct to be condoned officially. His form master has set him so many lines of Virgil to prepare. It is assumed that he will take an hour to prepare those

The True Ethics of Cribbing

lines properly. However, with the help of Dr Giles's translation, he has managed to prepare those lines satisfactorily in twenty minutes. He has gained, therefore, forty minutes; naturally the master demands, and exacts, a reparation. But his companions do not mind. And he regards as anti-social only what will offend them. If he were a thief it would be in their eyes that he would be guilty. But a theft only becomes criminal when the injured party has taken proceedings against the offender. In this case no proceedings have been taken. He has not been reported to the head master, nor has he been kicked round the cloisters. He considers himself to be innocent. Indeed, popular opinion is far more likely to be directed against the boy who is scrupulously honest. His behaviour may be anti-social.

There was a form, for instance, in which it was the custom for the boys to correct their own papers and give up their own marks. They would pass their papers to the next boy but two. The answers would be read out and the marks awarded. When all the answers had been given the marks would be added up. 'Any one over 90?' a couple of hands would rise. 'Any one over 95?' one of the hands would sink. 'Right,' said the master. 'Divide all marks by 11.' The names of the boys would then be read out in turn, and the marks earned by each would be delivered by the corrector.

Now the correction of exercises and the addition of marks entails a measure of labour,

Public School Life

and no one does unnecessary work. It had become the custom, therefore, to doze pleasantly while the answers were being given out, to insert various hieroglyphics in the margin, and to return at the conclusion an average total. The system had been in existence a long while, and it was known that the top mark usually lay somewhere between 100 and 90; a top mark of over 110 or beneath 80 would rouse comment, perhaps inspire investigation, and that was, of course, the last thing the form desired. So that, when the form master said any one 'over 90' some one on the front bench raised a hand. It happened in rotation more or less; at the end of the term there was little to choose between the top ten in the marks for those particular exercises. Certainly whatever difference there was could be easily counteracted by superior proficiency in some other field.

All went well till a certain Miller was promoted into this particular form. Miller was a prig: he came from an undistinguished house. He was excessively industrious. He had the prudé's morality. He was desperately honest. He corrected the papers passed to him accurately and gave up the right mark.

During his first week in the form, when the top mark was 91, Miller gave up 63. The form master was surprised; Miller had corrected the paper of quite a senior member of the form. 'Really, Jones,' he said, 'I'm surprised.' Jones also was surprised. After the lesson he expressed his surprise with a well-aimed kick that landed

The True Ethics of Cribbing

Miller at the foot of the second landing. He considered that no further explanation was required. He was wrong.

The next day, when the top mark was 103 he received 57. On the occasion of this second essay in originality the whole form decided to interest itself in Miller's welfare. There was an informal meeting at the end of the hour, in which Miller was given to understand that on this system exercises had been marked in the Middle Fifth for upwards of twenty years. Tradition had approved the system. The form was conservative. It meant to uphold that tradition. In earnest of its intention it proceeded to demonstrate what defensive method it would adopt. Miller made no answer, but the next day he not only returned Jones's paper with 65 at the head of it, but when a certain Burton announced that the paper he had marked was worth 103, Miller said something to the effect that the maximum was 93.

Such a thing had never happened before in the Middle Fifth. It was an orderly form, but there was very nearly a popular demonstration. Burton's honour had been questioned. The form master agreed that such an imputation had not been made upon a boy during the five-and-twenty years that he had sat in that class-room. 'We'll go through the questions one by one and see what the maximum is.'

Now, luckily for Burton, the master had not kept a check upon the marks. He had gone through question after question, saying after

Public School Life

each: 'Now let me see, I think that should be worth 10,' or 'that 15.' So that, when he went through the questions again, he appealed, on each occasion, to the head boy of the form. 'How many did I give you for that, Evans?' And, on each occasion, Evans was generous.

Once Miller timidly suggested that for Question 6, 15 marks and not 30 had been the maximum, but there was a complete unanimity of opinion among the rest of the form. 'Thirty, sir, certainly it was 30. It must have been—I've got 23 down to Firth for that, sir.' Miller was overruled.

The maximum was finally discovered to be 130. 'So you see, Miller,' said the master, 'you've not only questioned Burton's word, but you've been inattentive during the lesson. You will do me 200 lines, and if you will hand me up Jones's paper I will correct it myself.' With this generous addition to the maximum Jones received a heavy mark.

After such a disaster the form felt certain that Miller would bow to the convention; but there is no limit to the obstinacy of the martyr: Miller continued to mark according to order. He was kicked, but kicking was of no avail. His own paper was undermarked. This, too, was unavailing. Finally the form decided to accept him as an inevitable affliction. They ceased to kick him. Each of the ten top boys took it in turn to sit two places away from him so that no one person should suffer unduly from the general evil. And the one who sat two places on the

The True Ethics of Cribbing

other side of Miller had instructions to overmark his paper so that he should be got out of the form as speedily as possible. At the end of the term Miller was promoted; and the Middle Fifth relapsed into its placid communal existence.

Now Miller's conduct would no doubt appear worthy of the most intense approval. He had behaved like the hero of the school sermon. He had done what every new boy is adjured to do. He had taken a firm stand against a dishonest practice. He had been bullied, but he had remained firm. His honour had withstood the shock of his opponents. Such a splendid example would shine like a candle in a dark cathedral, and from this simile the preacher, as a runner reaching the straight, can stride into the rounded periods of his peroration. 'If only others of you would light your candle from that flame; if only in that large cathedral there were a hundred burning candles instead of one, how soon would not the whole building be filled with light. The beautiful tracery of the roof would emerge from shadow. A soft glow would be shed on the strong carved pillars. The brasses would glimmer on the wall. The splendid architecture of the building would be plain. So is it with the human soul.'

We have heard that sermon many times. Miller is a splendid handle for rhetoric, but his behaviour remains anti-social. If it is wrong to place oneself in a position of inequitable advantage, it is equally wrong to place a rival in a

Public School Life

position of inequitable disadvantage : and that is what Miller had done. Jones had done his work as thoroughly and as conscientiously as the others, but he had received lower marks for it, because Miller had chosen to apply to it a standard that was not imposed on that of his companions. It is not unfair in a hundred yards' sprint to start a second before the pistol is fired if you know that the other runners are going to do likewise, but it is hard lines on the one runner who is compelled to wait for the proper signal. True morality plays an insignificant part in business and competition. We all have different ideas of what is sport. If W. G.'s much-criticised running out of Jones in the Test Match of 1880 had taken place at a house match at school, we can assume that W. G., whatever his batting average, would not have been invited to play for the school again. What is moral and what is anti-social become practically synonymous terms as long as every one starts fair and plays the game by the same code of rules. No one must be allowed opportunities that are not at the disposal of his opponents. And, in the case of the Middle Fifth's corrections, the rules of the game ordered generous marking and no great gulf between the first and last. Miller played the game by different rules. The form was righteously indignant. It is doubtful even whether Miller's immortal soul drew sustenance from the conflict. It was probably confirmed in its priggishness. Certainly Miller became, in the course of time, a highly officious prefect.

The True Ethics of Cribbing

I do not know what fortune the 'romance of destiny' may hold in store for him, but I can imagine that he will occupy some post of prim, precise officialdom. He will create nothing. Whereas Evans's opportunism is largely responsible for the rapidly increasing market for Messrs. ——'s patent cookers.

The schoolmaster asserts that between himself and his form there exists a compact of square dealing. But the signature of the form has not been obtained, and it is an agreement every clause of which is very clearly to the advantage of the schoolmaster and to the disadvantage of the form. The form does not recognise the treaty. It refuses to commit itself, and indeed in this singular document the true nature of cribbing has not been defined. The exact line between cribbing and co-operation has not been drawn. We are safe when dealing with 'con,' that is to say, the translation of Greek or Latin into English. We know, for instance, that boys are allowed to prepare their work together. Two brains are better than one. Well and good. But, if two soldiers have to dig a trench one uses the pick and the other the shovel. So it is with Latin 'con.' One boy looks up the meaning of the words in a dictionary; the other unravels the sense. That means that the boy who looks up the words never brings his mind to bear on the translation of the text. Yet such a combination is accepted as fair by any master. And, once this combination has been accepted, a master's position becomes logically impossible.

Public School Life

For it must be remembered that a schoolboy has a fairly sound grasp of consecutive reasoning. He studies the theorems of geometry. He struggles with the dialectic of Plato. He is capable, that is to say, of following out to their logical conclusion such lines of argument as will, in the end, assuage his conscience. He could construct, for instance, an imaginary conversation between Socrates and his form master.

Soc. : You object, Mr. Featherbrain, to the cribbing that is prevalent in your form ?

Mr. F. : Certainly.

Soc. : Now, as I am inexperienced in this matter, never having been myself to a Public School, perhaps you will be so kind as to make me better acquainted with the methods adopted by these members of your form.

Mr. F. : Certainly. Some of the boys use English translations with which to prepare their Virgil and Homer. Others copy the Greek prose of their more clever companions, inserting, from time to time, certain gross errors that they expect will throw me off the scent.

Soc. : I understand. Now, in this matter of English translations: you expect each boy to prepare his Virgil by himself, and to produce in form the results of solitary unaided labour ?

Mr. F. : Certainly.

Soc. : If, therefore, you discovered one boy asking another to explain to him a difficult passage, you would punish him severely ?

Mr. F. : No. You have misunderstood me. I should not.

The True Ethics of Cribbing

Soc. : But how is that ? Have you not just told me that each boy must produce in form the results of solitary, unaided labour ?

Mr. F. : Certainly, but we allow boys to prepare their ' con ' together.

Soc. : I understand. On the assumption that two brains are better than one, you permit two boys to unravel the sense together.

Mr. F. : Certainly.

Soc. : Now, if two people attempt a certain task, what procedure would they follow ? Would they not divide the task into two portions. If two men are building a house one man stands at the top of a ladder and lays the bricks that his companion, who is standing below, throws up to him.

Mr. F. : Certainly.

Soc. : Time would be wasted were each man to do the same work: that is to say, were two ladders to be placed against the wall and were the two men to descend and ascend the ladder carrying bricks to the top ?

Mr. F. : Certainly.

Soc. : Therefore, we may assume that in all tasks that are undertaken by two persons, the work is divided into two duties ?

Mr. F. : But I do not see, Socrates, that this line of reasoning has any bearing on the subject we are preparing to discuss.

Soc. : That may very well be, for, as I have told you, I am ignorant of these matters and have come to you for guidance. It does seem to me, however, that in this matter of translation,

Public School Life

which is the discovery of an unknown thing, the unknown may be divided into two parts.

Mr. F. : How is that ?

Soc. : When a boy reads over the passage that he has to translate, two things are unknown to him: the general meaning of the passage and certain words in the passage. That is so, is it not ?

Mr. F. : Certainly.

Soc. : Then do you not think that two boys, before setting out to translate a passage, would make some arrangement by which one of them should be responsible for unravelling the sense, while the other should look up the unknown words in a dictionary.

Mr. F. : It is possible.

Soc. : And to which of the two would be entrusted the task of unravelling the sense.

Mr. F. : To the cleverer, undoubtedly.

Soc. : Therefore the less clever would do the drudge work: that is to say, he would never bring his mind to bear upon the passage: and the imaginative work would be done for him by his companion.

Mr. F. : It would seem so, Socrates.

Soc. : Yet the system is approved as an honest one by the authorities and the work of the drudge is accepted as solitary and unaided labour.

Mr. F. : That is so, Socrates.

Soc. : Now, is this task of translation limited to the co-operation of two persons, or may three or more persons take their share in it ?

Mr. F. : As many persons may take their share

The True Ethics of Cribbing

in it as may conveniently be crowded into a study measuring eight feet by four.

Soc. : I understand. Suppose now that three persons are preparing a passage together. We have agreed, have we not, that this work can be divided into two duties only ?

Mr. F. : That is so.

Soc. : Then what share of the work will the third partner take ?

Mr. F. : He will act as a reserve and will bring assistance to either party when it is necessary.

Soc. : But, to whom have we allotted the task of unravelling the sense: to the cleverest, have we not ? If the help of the third party, then, is only requested when the cleverest finds himself in difficulties, does it seem to you likely that the third party will succeed where one cleverer than himself has failed ?

Mr. F. : It is unlikely.

Soc. : And, if this third party is higher and more important than the second party, it is unlikely, is it not, that he will content himself with what we have admitted to be the drudge's work of looking up words in a dictionary ?

Mr. F. : It is unlikely.

Soc. : Then the third party will do nothing save profit by the industry of his two companions, and the work that he will produce in the class-room next day will, strictly speaking, be not his at all, but theirs.

Mr. F. : It would seem so, Socrates.

Soc. : Now, let us take a further example. For I am anxious to discover at what exact point

Public School Life

the work that a boy produces in form will cease to be, in the official eye, the result of solitary and unaided labour. Suppose that the third party is a member of the Eleven, who has various social duties: it is possible, is it not, that he would prefer to spend over his translation less than the three-quarters of an hour that his two companions require?

Mr. F. : It is possible.

Soc. : Then, is it impossible that he might arrange for the cleverer of the two to come to him after breakfast and explain to him in twenty minutes the meaning of the passage?

Mr. F. : It is possible.

Soc. : And such an arrangement would be accepted by you?

Mr. F. : I do not see that I could object.

Soc. : Now let us suppose that the cleverer of the two finds that he will have to clean his corps clothes during the twenty minutes between breakfast and chapel. He will feel himself bound in honour, and also by fear, to translate the passage to the third party, but he will obviously be unable to do it in person. Is it not likely, therefore, that he will write out the meaning of the passage and hand it to the third party? Would such conduct be unacceptable to you?

Mr. F. : I do not know, Socrates.

Soc. : But, surely in your own mind you have clearly defined the line that separates what is honest from what is dishonest. Surely that is your profession—to teach the young to distinguish between what is good and what is not good?

The True Ethics of Cribbing

Mr. F. : That is so, Socrates.

Soc. : Then do you see any real difference between hearing a translation and reading a translation? Is there any difference between a meaning that is apprehended through the ear and a meaning that is apprehended through the eyes; for are not both eyes and ears channels through which meanings are carried to the brain?

Mr. F. : It would seem so, and, when you put it that way, I can distinguish no essential difference.

Soc. : Very good: then we have established that it is fair for a boy to come to his study after breakfast, find in his hand a written translation of his Virgil, and, with that written translation, prepare in twenty minutes his morning's lesson.

Mr. F. : It would seem so, Socrates.

Soc. : If, however, he were to take from his drawer a printed translation of Virgil, and with that prepare his morning's lesson, you would consider him capable of dishonest behaviour and you would report him to the head master.

Mr. F. : Most certainly, Socrates.

Soc. : In what, then, lies the essential difference between the printed translation and the one that was copied out for him by his companion?

Mr. F. : But that is surely obvious.

Soc. : It is not to me, and it is for this reason that I seek enlightenment of you. For to me it seems that the work produced in form by the boy who has studied the printed translation is

Public School Life

every bit as much the result of solitary and unaided labour as that which is informed by the study of a written translation. But is it that you appreciate a difference between the written and the printed word?

Mr. F. : Perhaps that is it, Socrates.

Soc. : Then would you allow a boy during the holidays to copy out one of Dr. Giles's aids to the classics?

Mr. F. : Most certainly not.

Soc. : Then it is not between the written and the printed word that the difference lies?

Mr. F. : It would seem not.

Soc. : Then where does it lie?

Mr. F. : I do not know, Socrates.

Soc. : Then we must surely assume that there is no difference; and we must further add that you have not dealt honestly with your form in so severely punishing them for conduct that you, yourself, are not able logically to condemn.

Mr. F. : As ever, Socrates, you have succeeded in making me say what I did not mean to say.

Soc. : Then, in order that you may extricate yourself, let us consider this question of the prose.

Mr. F. : Certainly. For, here at least, my position is impregnable.

Soc. : I, too, am certain of it, and, in order that I may know the true nature of the offence, you will, I hope, permit me to ask you certain questions. You say that the more stupid members of your form are in the habit of copying the exercises of their more clever comrades?

The True Ethics of Cribbing

Mr. F. : That is so.

Soc. : Now is it a rule that a boy may not give another assistance in his Latin prose ?

Mr. F. : Certainly.

Soc. : The position is not the same as that of the Latin translation, where two boys were permitted to co-operate ?

Mr. F. : Certainly not.

Soc. : I presume that you have explained to your form the essential difference that exists between the nature of Latin 'con' and Latin prose.

Mr. F. : How do you mean, Socrates ?

Soc. : Why, surely, if in the preparation of Latin 'con,' which is the translation of Latin into English, two boys are allowed to co-operate, and, if in the preparation of Latin prose, which is the translation of English into Latin, they are not allowed to co-operate, it follows that there must be some essential difference in the nature of the two studies.

Mr. F. : It would seem so, Socrates.

Soc. : It would certainly seem so, and this difference you have, no doubt, made clear to your form, for, at present, I must confess myself unable to discover in what it consists. The exercise of Latin prose as of Latin 'con,' for each study is the translation of a language and the correct rendering of the idiom of that language into the language and idiom of another tongue, is no doubt intended to train, inform, and quicken the intelligence. Each would appear to be branches of the same study, and for each the

Public School Life

same method of instruction should be employed. You tell me, however, that there is between these two branches an essential difference.

Mr. F. : You are right, Socrates, and, though I cannot explain the difference in so many words, its nature is plain to me.

Soc. : Of that, Mr. Featherbrain, I am certain. I understand that you apprehend this fine distinction as you apprehended the fine distinction between the written and the printed 'crib.' We should consider, though, whether this distinction is equally plain to your form. Such intuitive knowledge may be denied to them, and, if they sin through ignorance, their sin is slighter than if they sinned through knowledge. Tell me, now, whether, if you overheard one member of your form say to another on the way to chapel : 'I'm absolutely tied up with that piece of prose. Shall I put it in O. R. or O. O. ?' would you immediately report that boy to the head master ?

Mr. F. : I should not.

Soc. : You would no more report him than if you had overheard him asking his friend to make clear to him a passage of Virgil that had puzzled him.

Mr. F. : That is so.

Soc. : Do you not think, therefore, that the boy who knows he is allowed to ask for help in his Latin 'con,' and who does not know for what reason he is not allowed to ask for help in his Latin prose, who has never, that is to say, been able to apprehend the fine difference between

The True Ethics of Cribbing

the nature of the two studies, is likely to consider that the same technique is permissible for both branches, and would not that third party of whom we spoke and who is in the habit of getting his Latin 'con' done for him by his friend, consider himself morally justified in accepting the same assistance in his Latin prose?

Mr. F. : But I have told him that it is not allowed.

Soc. : Certainly, but good can only come from a reasoned knowledge of what is good, and you have not explained to him in what his fault consists. Moreover, if you have granted him permission to seek advice in small matters, you must tell him at what exact point the thirst for information becomes dishonest; a line must be drawn between what is good and what is bad. Is a boy responsible for a percentage of his prose, and, if so, for what percentage. Have you made these things plain to him?

Mr. F. : I have not, O Socrates.

Soc. : Then how do you expect the unformed mind of a boy to draw this line for himself. It would seem to me, Mr. Featherbrain, that you are not training the youth as it should be trained, when you order its conduct not by the results of logical deduction but by arbitrary ruling. For if in your own mind you are not certain at what exact point the good becomes the bad, and indeed are not certain of what the bad consists; what confusion must you not expect to discover in the minds of those that are taught by you. You must remember that on the football and

Public School Life

cricket field a boy is under orders which he accepts, but of whose moral nature he is ignorant. He knows that if he is offside in football a free kick is awarded to the other side; he knows that if he knocks the ball forward with his hands a scrum is given. He has made a mistake. He has committed a tactical, but not a moral offence. The rulings of the Rugby Union are arbitrary and subject to frequent alteration; whereas the rulings concerning what is good and what is bad are fixed and irradicable. Is it not likely, therefore, that a boy will come to regard your rulings in these matters of cribbing as arbitrary rulings that may be altered. His life is a game, you must always remember that, and it is on that basis that he accepts it. He knows that he will be punished if he uses a crib; he knows that you appear to apprehend a distinction between the written and printed word; he knows also that you have discovered a difference in the nature of the studies of translation and prose, and that while you will allow him to ask advice on certain points you will not allow him to seek advice on the whole, though at the same time you do not define the point at which these same certain points cease to be certain points and become sufficiently part of the whole to be called the whole. Can you expect him, then, to regard such a system as anything but the complicated rulings of a game played between you and him. And can you expect him to attach to these regulations any moral significance. On the cricket field he places his leg in front of the

The True Ethics of Cribbing

wicket and tries to hit a short length ball over square-leg's head. If he misses the ball he is leg before, and goes to the pavilion. In his study he prepares his translation with a crib; he is discovered by his house master; he goes to the head master. And it is in this spirit, Mr. Featherbrain, that your form deceives you. You have to make clear to the young many things before you can expect them to attach a moral significance to what has no logical proof.

There may be flaws in the argument, for the Socratic method is insidious, but I have not, myself, been able to discover them. The ethics of cribbing from the master's point of view are illogical. The exact point where co-operation starts and cribbing begins is not fixed.

Cribbing goes by form and houses. Its activities expand and contract according to the demands of popular opinion. It is always communal. There is a conscription of intellect and knowledge. No boy would prejudice his chances of winning his house cap; but most boys would assist their most dangerous rivals in promotion. We hear in chapel sad stories of the large and brutal bully who cribs steadily throughout the term and wrests the prize from the pure innocent who looked up every word in a large Lewis & Short. But it rarely happens like that. No one cribs for a prize, because few really want a prize. Occasionally cribbing wins a prize, but it is usually through a fluke.

A boy is particularly nervous about the results

Public School Life

of a certain paper. He takes elaborate precautions to make sure that he will not have to spend the last Saturday of term rewriting the paper, and, in consequence, unexpectedly discovers himself at the head of the list. I recall one such instance in particular, and, because it seems to me so singularly appropriate, I may be pardoned, I trust, for retelling a story that I have incorporated elsewhere.

Divinity in the army class was a casual affair; a knowledge of the Old Testament not being considered a necessary part of the intellectual equipment of a subaltern, the Sandhurst authorities did not examine candidates on the subject, and both the form and its master regarded the hour's lesson on Sunday morning as a pause in the exertions of the week. The yearly divinity examination always occasioned, therefore, a measure of panic among the soldiers, for the form master, when confronted with irrefutable proofs of his own indolence, was in the habit of punishing not only the form but himself by keeping in for two hours on the last Saturday those of the form who had failed to score an adequate percentage. During the preceding days feverish and spasmodic attempts were made to cope successfully with the complicated relations of kings and prophets. One year, however, the form was fortunate.

A certain Mallaby, while searching in the class-room just before lock-up for a book he thought he had left there, saw lying among the papers on the master's desk, the rough draft of the questions for the divinity exam. In surprised

The True Ethics of Cribbing

delight he copied them all down. According to the popular conception of schoolboy honour, Mallaby, being a potential thief, would have kept the information to himself. Being a boy, however, he imparted it to his companions. The form entered the examination room in a mood of quiet confidence, and left it in a mood of deep content. Two days later, however, it was announced that this year the annual interest of a bequest would be devoted to a series of divinity papers throughout the school. The next day Mallaby learnt that he was head of the army class in divinity.

His conscience was fluttered. He could not, he felt, take a prize which he would have won through cribbing. It would be dishonest. It would be stealing. He announced his intention of explaining matters to the chief. This announcement was not, however, received with the enthusiasm that should have welcomed the imminence of so noble, so disinterested, so sacrificial a performance. The form was indeed seriously perturbed. It explained to Mallaby that, if he went to the chief, he would be queering not only his own pitch, but theirs as well, and that there were certain members of form who did not stand well enough in the eyes of authority to be able to risk such an addition to their score of discovered crimes. 'And, after all,' they said, 'why shouldn't you take the prize? We all knew the questions; you took the trouble to prepare them. You worked hard, and prizes are the reward of hard work. You've worked

Public School Life

for the prize, harder than we did. Therefore you deserve the prize. And let's have no more of this nonsense about confession.'

In these matters each form and each house works out its own salvation. In some houses cribbing is not general, and in some forms cribbing is not general; and, in such cases, cribbing is anti-social. It might be urged that boys from houses that do not crib find themselves at a disadvantage in relation to boys from houses that do. But life usually manages to adjust itself, and a boy's position in form is chiefly important as regards the relation it bears to that of the other members of his house. It does not matter much to a boy in the school house if he is passed by a boy in Buller's. It will not affect his seniority in his own house, and it is his seniority in his own house that matters. Only a very few are concerned with the specialised rivalry of the Upper Sixth that decides who will be the official head of the school. Scholastically the ambition of few passes outside their house. In games it is different. But then the eleven is not a fluid body like the Sixth; it is a close corporation, and once the reputation of being the best slow left-hand bowler is lost, the chance of a ribboned coat grows distant.

I remember once a parson from the East End preaching a sermon in the school chapel, in which he intimated that in comparison with the loathsome atrocities that had for setting the Mile End Road, a schoolboy merely played at sin. This was reassuring to certain genial

The True Ethics of Cribbing

sportsmen who had hitherto been unable to view with any confidence the prospect of immortality: and the phrase 'playing at sin' passed into the vocabulary of the school. To such an extent, indeed, that the head master was forced to deliver a special midweek address, in which he pointed out that the degree of sin was relative to environment, and that the moral offences of a man who had been nurtured in surroundings of bestiality and filth were less grave than those of the boy who had spent his childhood in the clean atmosphere of a decent home. The complacency of the aforesaid sportsmen was broken. Not only were their offences as serious as those of their less fortunately placed brethren, they were actually more grave: a disquieting reflection. But I have often felt inclined to question, not the irrefutable logic of the head master's sermon, but the truth of that original contention about 'playing at sin.' Are, that is to say, the vices of the lower orders actually more startling than those of Mayfair? Are they more startling? I wonder: a higher standard of civilisation refines our pleasures, quickens our powers of appreciation, makes us more subtle, more complex; does it not also sharpen the edge of misbehaviour? It is a point on which perhaps Casanova would be able to enlighten us. But, certainly, in the matter of cribbing, the methods of the lower forms are clumsy, unimaginative, bourgeois in comparison with those of the Fifths and Sixths.

A master who expects to discover in the

Public School Life

Third the guile of the Fifths will be disappointed; and, equally, the master who has successfully combated the guile of the Lower Second may discover himself completely outwitted by the Middle Sixth. In the Lower School the use of the actual crib is rare. It is easy for the Sixth Former to possess himself of a translation. The Everyman series contains excellent renderings of Thucydides and Plato. The Loeb library is not useless. Gilbert Murray may be a poet, but his translations of Euripides have proved of assistance to many a harassed student. Jebb's version of Sophocles is to be found in the shelves of the school library. It is a different job to find a crib of Ovid and Livy. Dr. Giles has done some excellent research work, but questions are apt to be asked about bona fide students; an address such as 'The School House, Fernhurst,' is likely to wake suspicion, and the Third Former has not read enough French novels to appreciate the value of the *poste restante*. He considers that a crib is more trouble than it is worth. And what is cribbing but laziness! Moreover, he has a distrust of cribs. He is naturally stupid or he would be higher in the school, and he knows that when a boy gives the right meaning to the wrong words there are unpleasant investigations. He prefers to rely on the inspiration of the moment : as a result the offences of the Lower Second are trivial. They rarely reach the green baize of the head master's study. One boy looks over another's paper, another is prompted during 'con,' there

The True Ethics of Cribbing

is a strange similarity between two Latin proses, an unusual mistake is repeated in several exercises. The offender is beaten afterwards, and no more is heard about it. As a matter of fact there is less cribbing in the Lower School than in the Upper. Opportunities are rare and the example of hardened criminals is absent. The second yearer only becomes a practised deceiver under the influence of his seniors, and there are not many third yearers in the Lower School. Higher up it is different. But it is to be doubted whether the effects of cribbing are as serious as they are depicted.

The case against them comes under two main headings: (1) The moral issue; (2) The expediency issue. With the moral issue I have already dealt. Most boys crib at school, but the public school man is straighter in business than the self-made man and the American. Nearly all men will boast in their clubs of the way they bamboozled 'old Moke,' of how they pinned up the rep. on the back of the boy in front, and of how they used to strip off the cover of the translation book and sew it round one of Dr. Giles's publications; but the man who has forced a young inventor into a hard contract remains silent. It is a matter that he prefers to keep to himself. I do not believe that cribbing saps the moral sense.

The expediency issue is more complicated. And, on the surface, it does seem that the use of a crib is the very worst thing for a boy who hopes to win scholarships and fellowships. It is

Public School Life

a short cut. He does not need to use his brain. His thinking is done for him. That is true, but there are points on the other side. He is set fifty lines of Virgil to prepare. If he comes into form next morning with those lines half learnt he will derive little benefit from the hour's lesson. The whole time he will be worrying at the sense. He will not be able to give his full attention to the points of grammar and history that will arise in the course of the hour. If, on the other hand, he is free from the anxiety of failure he is able to give his full attention to what is perhaps the more important part of the lesson. Also a boy remembers what he has worked out for himself; and a crib used intelligently provides just enough struggle to impinge the result of the effort on the memory. And the wise do use a crib intelligently. They not only want to know their 'con' for the next day: they also wish to be able to remember it for the examination. They, therefore, read a sentence over first in the original. Some one wonders what a certain word means. The word is looked up. Then a shot is made at the sense, not a very serious shot perhaps, and speedy reference is made to the crib. The English is read out loud. 'Now, how does he get that out of it?' some one asks. There is a minute of tussle and explanation—then all is clear. And the next sentence is read out loud.

That is the way to use a crib. And if one has worked out for oneself, even if it be with the aid of a crib, the meaning of a long passage of Virgil,

The True Ethics of Cribbing

one remembers that passage. I have forgotten now nearly all my Greek and Latin, but I can still read currently and with pleasure the Eclogues, for which I used a crib. Whereas the memory of other books, through which I struggled honestly, but less successfully, has faded altogether. For the average member of the Sixth I believe the intelligent use of a crib is to be recommended. A greater number of lines could be prepared at one time, and there would be leisure for acquiring that knowledge that comes to us indirectly from the classics. Plato is a window through which we see the gymnasiums of Ancient Greece. But it will be shuttered for those to whom the struggle is ever with correct rendering and syntax.

The real scholar, whose life will be spent largely with the classics, must avoid short cuts; he should glory in difficulties that will quicken his wits: he has his whole life before him. He does not have to pass, as the rest of us do, swiftly into a world of politics and business. And, indeed, the real scholar realises this. I can recall few instances in which a boy with a really fine brain has deadened his perceptions by the use of translations. The scholar, when he reaches the Sixth, and is no longer forced to write the proses and prepare the translations of his less clever comrades, prefers to work alone, if not in the company of boys who are equally brilliant.

But the real scholar is the exception. This book is written for, and about, the average

Public School Life

schoolboy. I know that in the matter of cribbing I am pleading a lost cause. Cribbing will always, of course, be a forbidden thing; therein lies its charm. But it is important that master and parents should realise in what light these questions appear to the boy. A boy is frequently misunderstood. He is accused of dishonesty. He resents the accusation, but he is unable to explain why his offence does not deserve so stern a label. He is tempted to lose heart, to console himself with the reflection that 'they don't understand,' and so further estrange himself from sympathy and mutual understanding. The boy stands before the house master and lets the wind of words flow over him. What use is it for him to attempt an explanation. If he argues his punishment will be increased. It is better to assume contrition; to say, 'Yes, sir, I hadn't seen it in that light before,' and to be more clever another time. It would be far more just were the master to regard cribbing as a boy regards it: as a game, to be punished effectively when discovered, but not to be associated with the welfare of the human spirit.

If school authorities wish, however, to find a lasting cure they have in their own hands the remedy. They will not achieve their ends through increased vigilance; that will only make the boy more clever. They should make work more interesting. There is little cribbing in form where boys are interested in what they are learning. Boys are not anxious to learn what a master is not anxious to teach. Laziness

The True Ethics of Cribbing

begets laziness, and cribbing is a form of laziness.

Systematic cribbing will not disappear till popular opinion regards as important success or failure in the class-room. Success at games is considered important; games are, in consequence played fairly. But, as popular opinion sets no value on school work, it does not seem to matter much what happens in school hours. Success in form needs to be brought into some sort of relationship with success at football. Athletic prowess will always, naturally, and perhaps rightly, be rated more highly than intellectual achievement. But that is no reason why intellectual achievement should be disparaged in the case of all save the brilliant few whose feats are received with a mild enthusiasm. At Sandhurst we used to have weekly examinations, and, as far as I remember, there was no cribbing at all in these exams. To a certain extent promotion depended on one's performance in them, and each G. C. was anxious to work out the problems for himself so as to be able to judge how much, or how little, progress he had made. This did not mean that we were more interested in topography than late cuts, but that we realised that, at this stage of our career proficiency in topography would be of service to us. I believe that a similar state of affairs would exist at a Public School were the social values to be readjusted.

Cribbing, like so much else in public school life, is a side-shoot of athleticism.

CHAPTER VII

MORALITY AND THE ROMANTIC FRIENDSHIP

IT is at this period, also, of a boy's development that the moral question assumes a definite significance. There is no phase of school life that is more generally misunderstood and misrepresented, and there is no phase that a writer tackles with greater misgiving and disinclination. He is confronted with the barricaded prejudices of a vested interest, with the tremulous ignorance of mothers who seek to be deceived, with the conspiracy of silence that exists between boys, parents, and masters, and, last of all, with the wilful jealousy of the yellow press that is only too ready to decry the value of what it is pleased to call the 'trades union of snobbery.' There are times, indeed, when it seems better to acquiesce in that conspiracy of silence rather than to give those speculators in contention another opportunity of mud-slinging. There are times when it seems hopeless to attempt to explain the nature of public school morality to those who have not themselves been to a Public School. It is like looking at a stained-glass window from the outside. One reminds oneself that for many years, without, perhaps, any very disastrous results, we have muddled along in contented ignorance and self-deceit. Why not leave things

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

where they are? Why stir up trouble? And yet the moral question is such an essential part of school life, it exercises such an influence on the development of the boy; indirectly it colours so considerably the attitude of the master to every other phase of school life, that it is impossible to omit all reference to it in a detailed study such as this, and, if it is impossible to avoid mention of it, it is fatal to content oneself, as one may very well do in a novel, with stray suggestions and inferences.

A novel is an abstraction. One compresses into a few pages the action of several years, so that one has to suggest rather than to state. One can withhold one's own opinion, one is under no compunction to generalise from the incidents one selects. One is telling a story or interpreting a personality. Only rarely is one constructing a thesis. In a novel it is not difficult to deal with the moral question. Most good school stories have touched more or less indirectly on some side of it. Ivor Brown and Compton Mackenzie have both dealt subtly with an intricate relationship. Hugh Walpole, if less originally, faced the same situation more courageously, while Arnold Lunn in *Loose Ends* has interpreted the boy as opposed to the official attitude to this issue with extreme effectiveness. The novelist is constrained to discuss only that part of the question that affects the action of the story. That is one of the great charms of storytelling: one can touch lightly without need of explanation on the most delicate situations. One

Public School Life

can say only as much as one wants to say, and say it, what is more, obliquely. In a book such as this, however, one must deal with the subject thoroughly if at all. One must tackle every side of it. One is bound to follow one's thought through to the end. And that is a thing that no one cares to do in public. It was said of a certain intrepid Rugby player that he had not the brains to be afraid. It is certainly true that many soldiers lost their nerve after they had been once wounded, and that few soldiers were really frightened till they had seen what a shell could do; it may well be that at twenty-three one has not sufficient experience of the world to realise what risks one runs through honesty.

The first difficulty, especially for those who, without having been to a Public School themselves, are the fathers of present or prospective public school boys, is to start investigations with a clear mind. This feat the majority never manage to accomplish. For the moral question in schools is concerned with the relationship of two members of the same sex. Now such a relationship is counted in the world at large an unmentionable and unforgivable sin. It is regarded with horror by the average man. It is a penal offence. The man who enters into such a relationship is abnormal, and, as such, is considered a menace to society. But the same standards are not applicable to school life.

A man was intended by nature to marry at eighteen. The average villager, clerk, pit-boy, work-boy begins 'walking out' with a girl at

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

the age of fifteen or sixteen; the public school boy has no such opportunities of courtship. Three hundred boys are spending three-quarters of their lives in a monastic world; from the beginning of the term to the end the only women to whom they have the opportunity of speaking are the matron and the house master's wife. They have never any chances of seeing girls of their own class and of their own age. At a particularly susceptible period, therefore, they have no natural object for their affections. The youngest boys are only thirteen, the eldest are between eighteen or nineteen.

In such circumstances it would be surprising if there were no uncomfortable complications. The public school system is, in this respect, unnatural; one must expect unnatural results. The trouble is to discover what those results are. For, although people speak glibly enough of immorality in Public Schools, it is extremely doubtful whether they realise of what exactly that immorality consists.

It is a convenient phrase, but beyond it there is the conspiracy of silence. Schoolmasters prefer to deal with straight issues. They dislike the subtleties of action and character which are of such charm to the psychologist. They like to say, 'This is an offence.' Finer shades of meaning trouble them. At least that is their official attitude. And so it has come to be generally accepted that public school morality resolves itself into one main issue: that is, the corruption of a small boy by a big one. To

Public School Life

protect the new boy from this danger elaborate precautions are taken. It is on this point that a boy is given advice before he goes to school. He is warned never to make friends with boys bigger than himself; it is against this danger that the majority of school sermons are directed. And, of course, this is a very convenient attitude for the schoolmaster to adopt. The offence is obviously so grave that there can be no cause to withhold complete official condemnation; it is also so rare that the head master is able to assure prospective parents of the excellent tone of the school. For I am convinced that the deliberate seduction of a smaller boy is an extremely rare occurrence. There are, of course, certain houses—probably there is one at every school—in which a good-looking boy stands very little chance of remaining straight. But I have not been in such a house and I can speak with no authority. I have heard, certainly, some astonishing stories of what can be tolerated in a really bad house; but, second-hand reports, especially on such matters, can only be accepted with reserve. Certainly in the average house cases of corruption are very rare. Few boys have the nerve, the assurance, or the adroitness to attempt such a task. A man of twenty-five will set out deliberately to seduce a housemaid, but the schoolboy in such matters is a novice. If a senior boy is casually attracted by the appearance of a smaller boy, he asks a friend lower down in the house to make inquiries as to the morals of the small boy. If the 'go-between' discovers

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

that the small boy is 'straight,' the elder boy lets the matter fall from his mind. There are others who are not. If, on the other hand, the attraction is more than casual, the chances of seduction are even more remote. It is unlikely that the affection will be reciprocated. And, if a boy is really fond of another boy, the last thing he would wish would be to subject his friend to unwelcome advances. When a boy first falls in love with a girl the thought of sexual intimacy is, often, unattractive. It is only when his love is returned that he really desires it. It is fatal to confuse the processes of life at large with the processes of life in a monastic system. Because young men seduce young women with regrettable frequency, it is assumed that much the same sort of thing is happening at a Public School. And, parents believing this, are reassured; they are certain that their dear child when young will be strong enough to resist the passive temptation; they are equally certain that their dear child when nearly a man would not, for one moment, consider the possibility of active sin. And this amiable delusion schoolmasters encourage. It saves them a lot of trouble. They say one thing in public and another in private. But the Jekyll and Hyde business breeds confusion. They forget what they should believe and what they should not believe. They are agreed only on this: that any attempt at criticism, at explanation, at interpretation shall be counteracted with a concerted unanimity of opinion. They will deny

Public School Life

hotly the prevalence of any such practices, they will make slighting references to the bad house in the bad school. They will complete their defence by asserting that for what faults there are the parents are alone responsible in that they had not sufficiently warned their sons of the evils of a Public School—evils, be it noted, that they had previously assured the parent did not exist outside the perverted imagination of the critic. And yet it is amazing what these same apologists will be prepared to believe about any institution other than their own.

Six years ago Sandhurst had an extremely bad name. Every kind of debauch was rumoured to flourish there. Sobriety was only more unpopular than purity. The G. C.'s secreted whisky beneath their beds, and actresses within them. The glittering temptations of St Anthony allured the unwary in the tea-shops of Camberly. And I remember being shown, before I went there, a letter that had been sent to the parents of a prospective cadet by his head master. 'I hope,' the letter ran, 'that Arthur is aware of the temptations to which he will be subjected. Concupiscence seems to be the chief topic of conversation and the sole Sunday afternoon amusement of the cadets.' It all sounded fearfully exciting. But it proved very tame. Indeed I am inclined to think that, on the whole, fewer temptations presented themselves to me during the eight months I spent at Sandhurst than during any other period of my time in the army. A fellow could do what he liked. No pressure

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

was put on him to drink or gamble, or pursue loose women. He was none the less respected for being straight, nor the more admired for being crooked. A community such as this which exerts pressure on the individual in neither direction, I should be prepared to call as moral as any that is likely to be found this side of heaven, yet this head master, who would, no doubt, repudiate hotly the least suggestion that immorality in his own school was anything but a spasmodic and occasional phenomenon, was ready to believe that Sandhurst was a cesspool of all the vices that flourished so gracefully in the days of Petronius Arbiter. In our investigations we are not likely to be helped far by schoolmasters. They are constrained by the laws of exchange and mart to vindicate the quality of their wares.

It is generally assumed for the purposes of dialectic that there are two classes of persons: the normal and the abnormal, and that all normal people follow the same process of development from birth to death. To disprove this Havelock Ellis collected at the end of certain volumes of his psychology authenticated histories of men whose development he claimed to be normal, but whose histories were as different from one another as apples are from plums. In the face of such evidence it is dangerous to dogmatise on the gradual discovery of the sexual impulse by public school boys during adolescence. The most one can say is that the majority of them come to a Public School innocent and ignorant,

Public School Life

and that they leave it certainly not ignorant and with a relative degree of innocence. This at least is sure—that between the years of thirteen and nineteen the impulse will have become powerfully defined and that each boy will have had to come to terms with its direction and control.

Now the important point seems to me to be this: the sexual impulse is a force on the proper direction of which depends, to a large extent, the happiness of a man's life; and marriage is the course into which it should be directed. No one, I think, will deny that. We may talk of the liberation of the sexes, of greater facilities for divorce, of the right of each man and woman to repair a mistake caused by the first surprise of a newly-awakened instinct; but there can be no questioning the assertion that monogamy is the ideal, and that while nothing can be more wretched than an ill-harmonised relationship, in the lifelong devotion of man and woman is to be found the surest happiness. That is the standard by which public school morality should be judged. But it is not the standard by which it is officially, and indeed generally, judged. A Public School is only a phase, a prelude in the sexual development of a man. Head masters are inclined to mistake it for the completed rhythm.

In the same way that the head master of a Preparatory School specially coaches a boy for a scholarship, not realising that what for him is the whole race is for the boy but a first lap,

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

so the head master of a Public School regards the preservation of innocence between the years of 13 and 19 as the entire battle. As far as I can make out this attitude is adopted by nearly every unscientific writer on the subject.

If the matter ended there it would, of course, be simple. Rigid policemenanship and supervision and a system of spies would probably be effective. They might stamp out impurity to a large extent; they would also destroy the discipline of independence, of trust and of authority that one learns at a Public School. The matter is far less simple. The public school system is unnatural. Through unnatural channels, therefore, a natural impulse has to flow into a natural course.

Let us see, more or less, what happens.

We have assumed that an ignorant and innocent boy arrives at his Public School at the age of thirteen, and, to simplify the matter further, we will assume that the boy is not particularly good-looking, and is not, therefore, likely to win the patronage of his seniors. For the first weeks everything is so strange that he lives in a world of his own fashioning. Later on, as he begins to enter the life of the school, he is puzzled by references to an offence the nature of which he does not understand. He hears some one described as being 'smutty.' He does not in any way connect this with the elaborate address that was delivered to him on the last day at his prep. Indeed I knew of a new boy who informed his parents on a postcard that a

Public School Life

rather decent chap in his house had been nearly sacked for 'smut.' 'Is this,' he asked, 'anything serious?' He received in reply a reassuring letter telling him that he need not worry about such things just yet.

It is the fashion nowadays to demand open discussion of all subjects; there must be no secrets. Parents are told that they are guilty of criminal negligence if they do not instruct their sons and daughters in the physiology of sex. And, no doubt, it will be maintained that at this point the father should have written his son a long letter explaining to him the nature of the temptation to which he would be exposed. That is the fashion nowadays. No doubt the Victorians suffered from an excessive reserve. We have gone to the other extreme. We are trying to reduce love to an exact science.

On the whole, I suppose that the instruction of children by parents depends entirely on the individual case. But at such a time it would be very easy for the parents to become embarrassed and lose the boy's sympathy. The number of boys who learn from their parents more than a vague idea of motherhood is probably small. And at a Public School it is the physiology of fatherhood that occupies the boy's attention.

We are given to understand that in the first place a boy must be corrupted by another boy. But this is not generally the case. A boy usually manages to corrupt himself. He has overheard the conversation of older boys, he has discussed different problems with his companions; the

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

atmosphere of school life with its continual references to immorality in sermons and addresses, have made him precociously curious. He evolves for himself the practice of private immorality.

A boy's knowledge of sex necessarily is very fragmentary, and on many points he is actually misinformed. He has a preposterous idea, for instance, of the effects that this habit will have upon his health. Syphilis is not more dangerous. His hair will drop out, he will go blind, his brain will soften. Probably he will go mad. Numerical considerations mean nothing to him: once a thief always a thief. The idea of restrained disorder does not occur to him. He suffers from the misery of an incommunicable grief. He is apart from his fellows. If he told them his secret, he thinks that they would despise him. He becomes morbidly introspective. He makes vows to break himself of the habit, fails, and despises himself. He begins to search for the symptoms of his approaching physical and intellectual collapse. If he makes a duck at cricket, misses a catch in a house game, or fails badly in his repetition, he tells himself that the process has begun. There are times when he wants to steal away by himself like an animal that is sick. There are others in which he wishes at all costs to mix with his companions, to take part in any rag that is afoot; to this cause can be invariably attributed the mingled rowdyism and moodiness of certain boys. The idea that such practices are physically injurious is encouraged by the master. It appears to him

Public School Life

the most sure preventative. There are, indeed, occasions when masters are so misinformed that they actually believe in these terrible vengeance of the body. For schoolmasters who, of all people, ought to know most of hygiene and physiology, are, for the most part, woefully ignorant of them. It would be indeed interesting to discover what percentage of public school house masters have read any serious medical writing. They are only too willing to believe that such habits have the disastrous results they prophesy. And of course it has not, unless it is practised to excess and unless the subject is particularly feeble. It is foolish to throw lighted matches about the place, but the habit only becomes dangerous when the matches are flung on inflammable material.

It so happens that the greater part of active immorality in schools takes place between boys of fifteen and sixteen; not, as is more frequently imagined, between junior and senior boys. Such relationships are usually of brief duration. They pass with the dawn of the romantic friendship. And it is here that I feel most acutely the difficulty of my task. It is almost impossible to explain to some one who has not been to a Public School the nature of one of these romantic friendships. In a book called *Pleasure* I published a story dealing with such a friendship. The majority of old public school boys who read it seemed to like it. But none of the men who had not been to a Public School could make head or tail of it. They told me

136

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

in their reviews of it that it was absurd, mawkish, and unhealthy. It may be so. It may be that I wrote the story badly. I can only repeat that old public school boys liked it. And indeed it is a difficult thing to explain. For what is a romantic friendship but the falling in love of one boy with another. Such a relationship seems preposterous. I can only repeat that the public school system is unnatural, and that one must expect unnatural results from it. What, after all, is to be expected?

A boy of seventeen is passing through a highly romantic period. His emotions are searching for a focus. He is filled with wild, impossible loyalties. He longs to surrender himself to some lost cause. He hungers for adventures. On occasions he even goes so far as to express himself in verse, an indiscretion that he will never subsequently commit. And what focus does a Public School provide for this eager emotionalism? There are the fierce contests of the football field, but they are, when all is said and done, the business of life, the cause for his existence. They are an enthusiasm he shares with three hundred others. He longs for something more intimate, more personal; he is, in fact, in love with love; he does not see a girl of his own age, of his own class, from one end of the term to the other; it is in human nature to accept the second best.

In this environment there is nothing unnatural about the attraction exercised by a small boy over an elder one. A small boy is the nearest

Public School Life

approach possible to the feminine ideal. Indeed a small boy at a Public School has many of the characteristics that a man would hope and expect to find in a woman. He is small, weak, and stands in need of protection. He is remote as a woman is, in that he moves in a different circle of school life, with different friends, different troubles, different ambitions. He is an undiscovered country. The emotion experienced is genuine, and usually takes the elder boy by surprise. In a man's love for a woman there is often a degree of premeditation. A man looks at a woman and wonders if he could ever come to fall in love with her. As he walks homewards from her drawing-room he asks himself whether or not he is in love with her. He analyses his emotions; very often he persuades himself he is in love with her when in reality he is not. Either way he is prepared.

But the schoolboy is taken off his guard. He has not realised it is possible that he should fall in love with another boy. He has no previous experience which will enable him to recognise the symptoms. He has heard older boys spoken of as being 'keen' on some one or other, but he has associated such an assertion with the references in sermons to the corruption of a young mind. He does not, therefore, know what is happening when he finds himself becoming increasingly interested in some quite small boy. He has noticed him playing a plucky game on the Lower and has congratulated him. They have happened to meet on the way up from hall

138

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

and have walked across together to the studies. They have smiled when they passed each other as they changed from one class-room to another in break. The elder boy is surprised: he is still more surprised when he finds himself frequently walking into the smaller boy's study on no very necessary errand, to borrow a book he does not want or to return a book he has not borrowed; and that he should stop there to talk for an indefinite period. The day on which he has not seen or spoken to his small friend is empty for him. He does not understand his increasing wish for the company of an admittedly inferior person. But it is all very delightful. He is desperately anxious to appear in his best light. He makes strenuous, and often successful, efforts to abandon certain habits he had contracted. He may even work harder in form, and certainly he will make superhuman efforts on the football field, feeling that success will render him more attractive. He wonders what the small boy thinks of him, and persuades one whose social position lies midway between the two of them to make inquiries. The growing intimacy is a rich enchantment. He becomes curious, and, in a way, jealous of the life that his friend is leading; their standards, their environment, their friends are so different. He knows instinctively that one has more in common with one's contemporaries than with those who lie outside the circle of one's immediate interests, and this knowledge distresses him. There are times when he feels intensely miserable, others when

Public School Life

he feels radiantly happy. At any rate he is living more intensely and less selfishly than he did before. He is on a distinctly higher plane of emotional tension.

Indeed in its beginnings such a friendship is certainly good for the elder boy and probably for the younger one; at any rate there is the comfortable knowledge that he has an elder friend to whom he can turn for sympathy and advice; and he is protected thus from many of the dangers to which his good looks might otherwise expose him. The environment of school life does not allow, however, the friendship to retain its first freshness. It becomes conscious of itself. It is noticed by other members of the house: 'Hallo, Jones,' they say, 'seen anything of Morrison this morning?' Jones, being the elder, is embarrassed by what seems to him an accusation of weakness. Morrison is flattered to think that others have recognised and perhaps envied the patronage. Jones begins to make inquiries of his friends, and a series of confidences convinces him that he has reached the condition of being 'keen' on Morrison. This conviction places his friendship on an entirely different and, to a certain extent, official basis. If he had been left alone it is not improbable that he would have made no such discovery. As Morrison would never have more than liked him, his feeling for the smaller boy would not have become defined. Their friendship would have remained in the strictest sense of the word, platonic. But so frail a flower could not hope

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

to flourish for long in the rigid atmosphere of a Public School. Everything in a Public School has to conform to type ; there are rules for the proper ordering of every situation. Friendship, like personality, has to pass through the mint.

In order to follow the technique of such relationships, the official point of view towards them has to be understood. The house master on this point finds himself in extreme difficulty. And, indeed, there is no point on which schoolmasters as a whole waver quite so much. They realise, for the most part, that it is natural, if unfortunate, for boys to feel like this. At the same time they have to discountenance such friendships. Where actual misconduct is concerned, they think themselves to be on safe ground. And, as they believe that immorality in schools consists in the main of the corruption of small boys by big boys, they are able to speak with unrestrained violence against the majority of such friendships. They adjure their prefects to suppress at once the least sign of intimacy between a small and a big boy. They, themselves, watch carefully to see whether any of their seniors are evincing an interest in members of the day room. Every one in a school knows that a friendship between two boys of different positions will be viewed seriously by authority. A boy is given to understand that the romantic emotion he feels for a smaller boy is an emotion that is unworthy of him and of its object, and should consequently be suppressed. Such teaching is absolutely wrong. The emotions that a

Public School Life

boy has for a smaller boy are as natural as those that he would feel for a girl were he not restrained by an unnatural system. It is wrong to make a boy say to himself: 'I ought not to feel like this.' Such teaching is responsible for many of the mistakes that a boy will make when he becomes a man; it arbitrarily defines the form which the romantic friendship takes.

A boy is surprised by a new, delightful, interesting emotion. He feels strangely happy. Under its inspiration he works better and plays his games harder. He is told it is wrong to feel as he is feeling. But that he cannot believe. The emotions that are condemned in the pulpit and in confirmation addresses must in their essentials be different from those that he is feeling. That must be lust, the mere desire for sensation. This, on the other hand, is love. And so the public school boy of sixteen makes the discovery that love is in its highest form unphysical. The truth of this intuition is established for him by public opinion and by the course of his own experience.

The slightest suggestion of indecent conduct between the big and the small boy is regarded by boys as well as masters as the unforgivable offence.

It is hard to know exactly how important a part these friendships play in the life of a boy. It has often been said that the novelist falsifies life by writing too much about love, that except at certain periods of a man's life love occupies

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

only a small part of his attention; he is caught up by other interests. This argument, however, is no sounder than the objection raised by an old lady against the number of nudes displayed at the Paris Salon. 'It's so absurd,' she said, 'one-half of these portraits are nudes, and think how small a part of our life we spend without any clothes on.' A beautiful woman is most beautiful when she is naked, and a man's life is most interesting when he is in love. The condensation and indeed the actual elimination of whole periods must in a novel always falsify life for those who demand a direct transcription of it. If you were to record one average day of a man's life on gramophone and cinema and exhibit the result at the Alhambra you would empty the theatre in an hour. A story-teller recounts only what is of interest. He is a good or a bad story-teller according to the degree of his ability to discern what is, and what is not, of interest. He merely indicates the passage of the unimportant.

The man, therefore, who draws direct conclusions from a school story, would imagine that a schoolboy spends his entire time in form ragging masters, and, when not ragging, in cribbing, and that the rest of his time is divided between the fierce rivalries of the football field and the intrigues of romantic friendships. Such, it is needless to say, is not the case. The story-teller has only written of what seemed to him to be of interest. He has omitted, and he has expected his reader to realise out of his own

Public School Life

experience that he has omitted, the long, tedious hours of good behaviour, the ordered harmony of routine.

The romantic friendship has a modest place in the schoolboy's scale of values, but its nature is curious enough. It has the great charm of the forbidden. It is mixed with fear. Even after the first interest has waned, its setting makes it a delightful toy that no one would willingly throw away. It is the flavouring to the routine. There is usually a 'go between' who carries messages from one to the other. And the glance across a table stating that the intermediary has something of interest to disclose is one of the exciting moments of the day, as exciting as the post is to a recluse or the arrival of rations to a soldier. There are jealousies and intrigues. There is the interchange of notes—the joy of a secret. There are carefully arranged appointments. On Sundays there will be meetings in some prearranged point outside the town, at which each will arrive by a different route, and they will sit in a wood and talk till the afternoon has waned and the chiming of the abbey clock warns them that roll-call is imminent. It is not surprising that such an adventure should appeal irresistibly to a schoolboy. When such a friendship is ended either by the appearance of a rival, or more frequently through the inclination of the smaller boy, who has risen in the school and feels that such a position is beneath his dignity, the elder boy feels an immense gap in his life. The immediate sense

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

of anticipation has gone. There is nothing particular to which he may look forward. He is bored. Often he drifts into such another friendship out of loneliness.

Authority adopts towards these friendships a wavering attitude. It realises that such a friendship does not necessarily imply the least indecency, that it often, on the other hand, has a very salubrious effect on the elder boy, but it still is vividly aware of the danger. Suppose something went wrong; suppose there was a grave scandal, on whose shoulders would the responsibility rest. We can well imagine a resentful father asking a head master why, if he was aware of the existence of such a friendship, he did not take immediate steps to stop it. 'You knew about this,' he would say, 'while my son was still innocent: why did you not protect him? Why should you knowingly subject him to such a risk?' The head master has always to be thinking of what a boy's parents will say.

It is difficult for him to work on the plan of 'circumstances alter cases.' He would thus lay himself open to the accusation of favouritism. 'You didn't stop Cartright and Evans, sir,' is a weapon for which a master has no shield. There is usually a compromise.¹

¹ It may here be mentioned that in girls' schools such friendships would seem to be common, and no great objection taken to them. Unnatural vice between women is not, of course, a criminal offence. Its existence is not widely recognised. And it has never been treated very seriously by men. But it was surprising to read a few months ago in a

Public School Life

The attitude of authority is one of nervous hesitance. The schoolboy, as in all other cases, evolves his own standards from his own life. It remains to be seen what are the actual effects on the partners in a relationship that must have a large influence on their subsequent development.

The first objection raised by authority is that it is very bad for a small boy to be petted and treated like a girl. And such is an undoubted fact. The small boy who is taken up by a 'blood' makes a very good thing out of it. He gets first-hand information on a number of disputed points. He knows two or three hours before any one else in the day room who is going to be given his house cap and who his seconds. He has a position among his contemporaries. Favours are sought through him. His friends get leave off house runs and are allowed to watch First Eleven matches when others have to attend pick ups. He is immune from the assaults of the swash-bucklers, for no one would willingly run the risk of making himself unpopular with the bloods. He gets his 'con' done for him, and, after football, he will sit in front of a warm study fire. He has many privileges, and, of course, it is very bad for him.

How far the effects last into manhood I cannot say with any degree of certainty. I am inclined

leading London newspaper an article on 'schoolgirls,' which accepted such friendships among girls as an amusing topic for popular journalism. The editor would probably have had a fit if a similar article on romantic friendships in Public Schools had been submitted to him. The attitude of the man who has not been to a Public School to this side of school life is a mixture of ignorance and astonished horror.

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

to think that they pass more quickly than is popularly imagined. But the small boy who is taken up by his seniors gets very little out of his schooldays. If he gets taken up by a 'blood' he has a fairly good time while that blood is still at school. But it is by no means certain that he will be taken up by a blood, and he may very likely find himself an object of fierce jealousy between two fellows in the Middle School, both of whom he likes, but for neither of whom he feels any strong attachment. Neither of them is sufficiently important to claim a monopoly. Between them they contrive to make his life wretched for him. They worry him with notes and with pleas for an appointment. Each tries to persuade him to have nothing to do with the other. The whole of his spare time is divided between them. And the small boy who is unable to see why he should not choose what friends he likes, grows more and more impatient. At the end of a term's wrangling he decides to speak to neither of them again.

But the life even of the favoured-of-the-mighty has its disadvantages. The hours that he spends in the day room are numbered, so that he makes few friends among his contemporaries. The majority of them dislike him; nearly all of them are jealous and distrust him. They are afraid to say things in his presence for fear that they will be repeated. His only friends are those who hope to be able to gain some advantages from him. His life is made none

Public School Life

too comfortable in the dormitory. He is accepted as being in a higher social position than the rest of the room, which is, of course, flattering to his pride; but it is not nice when every occupant of the room only speaks when he is spoken to. He feels himself apart. The evenings in the dormitory which, with their sing-songs, their football matches, and long talks, provide such delightful material for reminiscence, are for him cheerless. It cannot be too often repeated that the biggest mistake a boy can make at a Public School is to form friendships outside the circle of his contemporaries.

The good-looking boy makes friends so easily among his seniors, and the successful athlete can, if he wants, after a year or two choose his friends among boys who have been at school a couple of years longer than he has. It is very exciting for a boy to feel that he is outstripping his contemporaries, to be able to nod to fellows in the Fifteen and Eleven, but, in the long run, it does not pay. The big man leaves, and the social aspirant is left stranded. I have seen it happen so many times. One term a boy seems to be surrounded with friends. His life is a continual course of tea parties and suppers. An arm always lies through his as he walks down to the field, or to the tuck shop. And then, suddenly, a generation passes; he is left an anachronism without his friends. His contemporaries do not welcome him. They have made their own friends. If he has reached his prominence as an athlete he will be able to make

Public School Life

bad,' says Authority. 'There would be no need for all this secrecy if the thing were honest and straightforward. They are both ashamed of themselves really. They wish to hide the thing away from their masters and their comrades. It is a bad thing for a boy, the harbouring of a secret. It will prey upon his mind. He will be forced to lie within himself. He will be unable to look us squarely in the face. He will never be free from worry.' Now all this about the subtle poison of a secret life is very true (though it is a fact seldom taken into account in the question of self abuse), but it is not at all applicable to the romantic friendship. The secret is an open secret. Neither party is ashamed of it. And the pretence of a secret is little more than part of a delightful game. A child in a nursery lays a deck chair on the blue carpet and imagines he is sailing the high seas in a schooner, while with a poker to his shoulder he shoots an albatross for breakfast. Twelve years later he signs notes with a false name, rolls them into a pellet, conveys them to a messenger and imagines he is a diplomat. The sending of notes is nothing but a game. Otherwise no one would write them, carry them, nor read them: for they are most unnecessary, and most dangerous. People will drop them in the cloisters, or put them in their waistcoat pockets and then leave their waistcoats in the matron's room to have a button sewn on them. The writing of notes has upset more careers than the rustling of silk or the creaking of shoes. And yet they

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

will always be written, for they are a prelude to adventure.

Moreover, a certain measure of secrecy is prudent. If you have stolen a man's greatcoat you do not call at his house next day wearing it; and the schoolboy sees no reason why he should parade his affection before his head master's study window. Only the ass courts trouble. Prefects who are well aware of the existence of such a friendship do not wish to have their attention called to it officially. There are things they prefer not to notice. If a member of the Eleven and a new boy started out together for a walk under the shade of the school buildings the heads of their houses would reluctantly feel themselves forced to take some sort of action. They would be extremely annoyed with the school slow bowler for his lack of tact. A prefect is usually on the side of the house.

Masters, however, are pleased to imagine that a pact has been signed between the schoolboy and themselves which binds the schoolboy to confess to any fault he may have committed, and to answer any leading questions that may be put to him. The schoolboy does not look on things in this light. He knows that there is no such agreement. There are certain things he wants to do, the doing of which, if known, will render him liable to punishment. When the wish to do these overrides the fear of punishment he takes all reasonable precautions to avoid detection, and proceeds to break the inconvenient rule. It is up to the master to find him out.

Public School Life

If the master came down to the dining-hall one evening and said: 'Now, look here, there have been complaints that some fellows, I don't say you, but fellows in the school, have been getting out at night and going down to the Eversham Arms. If any one of you here has been getting out at night, I want him to come to my study afterwards and tell me.' If a house master were to do that, the guilty one would not feel himself under the least compunction to own up. He has run a big risk in getting out of the boothole window at half-past eleven. It was up to the master to catch him then.

If a form master were to call a member of his form aside and say to him: 'Jones, last term you were bottom of the form; this term you have reached single figures. Last term you had to write me a hundred lines nearly every time I put you on to construe; this term you have not failed once. I cannot understand it. Are you working honestly?' Jones would reply: 'Yes, sir.' He would not feel that he was telling a lie. He would feel, on the other hand, that his form master had taken an unfair advantage of him in putting him a leading question. No one thinks a murderer lies because he says, 'Not guilty, my lord.' It is the law of England that the Crown has to prove the defendant guilty. A schoolboy considers himself entitled to the same rights as the murderer and the thief. A master has to find him out. And it is quite absurd to say that a boy's soul is going to suffer because of the secrecy he imposes on himself

152

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

in the course of a romantic friendship. There are a lot of things that a boy is not anxious that his house master should know, and of which no one could expect him to be ashamed. To smuggle into the dormitory a chicken, a loaf of bread, and a pound of cheese in preparation for a midnight feast is a natural and, according to one's point of view, a worthy act; but it is not a performance the success of which one would be in a hurry to confide in one's house master. When a schoolboy deceives a master he does not feel he is deceiving an individual, but an impersonal body. In the same way do we call the grocer's attention to the omission of a pound of butter on our weekly books, but skilfully conceal from the income-tax assessor a number of interesting facts. A lie is hardly a lie if the person telling it does not consider it so. We may dismiss altogether the assertion that romantic friendships are bad because they entail secrecy.

If, then, the objection of secrecy is to be discounted, it would at first sight appear that for the elder boy these friendships are, on the whole, good things. The emotion experienced is a noble one; it is unselfish, it makes considerable demands on the patience and self-control of the subject; it encourages the bigger boy to work hard and play his games harder; it protects him from many of the dangers of school life, and yet I believe that its results are, in the long run, more serious for the elder than for the younger boy.

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

no sort of use to place a lump of granite in front of the unnatural channel and say: 'This is forbidden.' The stream will only select another course, and very likely one that will not lead it to the natural waters.

It is, I admit, an extremely difficult question, but that does not alter the fact that it is being treated in an entirely wrong manner. The boy is told that sexual emotion is wrong; he assumes, therefore, that love to be truly love must be sexless. He draws fine distinctions between love and lust. A decent fellow, he says, would never want to do anything like that with some one for whom he really cared. And nothing happens in the course of his romantic friendship to make him reconsider this opinion. It is probable that his affection will not be returned; and, indeed, why should it be? Under such circumstances it is natural that a big boy should be attracted by a smaller boy because the smaller boy is the nearest approach to the feminine ideal. It would be quite unnatural for a small boy to be attracted by a bigger boy who would be to him as far as possible removed from femininity. The small boy likes the elder boy, is grateful for his kindness to him, is perhaps even mildly fond of him; nothing more. As, therefore, there is no response to the elder boy, it is impossible for the natural rhythm of mutually felt emotion to carry them out of the reach of conventional standards, and the friendship is too sacred to the elder boy to allow passage to the itch of sensation; while the small boy, even

Public School Life

if he happened to be casual among his contemporaries on such matters, would be restrained by the shyness that he must always feel in the presence of a senior boy and by the inevitable embarrassment at finding himself the object of an emotion he does not understand.

Nothing happens, therefore, to disabuse the conviction that love in its purest form is sexless. As a boy is, however, on the whole an amoral creature, he sees no reason why he should not misconduct himself with a person for whom he has no respect. He is not sullyng a fine romance. It is a different thing altogether; this is a thing of sensation. A bachelor refrains from prostitutes more often through fear of illness than through reverence for a moral code. There is at school a type that corresponds to the prostitute from whom boys refrain, when they do refrain, for many mixed reasons, of which fear of expulsion is generally not one. Boys are not afraid of punishments, nor do they think that a punishable offence is necessarily a moral offence. That point must always be kept in mind. Punishments to a boy's mind are part of the game that is played between him and authority. The boy has his own scale of values. He would think an immoral act highly reprehensible if he were at the time engaged in a romantic friendship, but he could square his conscience to it if he happened to be emotionally free.

The reasons why a boy commits an immoral act are so many and so complex that inquiry into them for the purpose of a generalisation is

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

unprofitable. It may be that he has had a quarrel with his small friend, it may be that he is bored, or that he is curious; he may think it the 'blood' thing to do. If he is literary he may be in search of some equivalent for the emotional reactions of decadent poetry. The confessions that a boy makes himself must always be accepted with reserve. The confessional is a subtle form of flattery. It titillates the egotism; it is a self-indulgence. Madame Bovary used to invent small crimes because she enjoyed the romantic atmosphere of the confessional, and though most schoolboys would stand in no need of such invention, they create the most ingenious setting for their offences. They feel what they want to feel. They have derived emotion at second hand from some book, or the confidence of an elder brother; they want to make themselves believe that they are interesting. The most trivial affair is embellished with a wealth of motive that would have delighted Henry James. Sometimes they lie quite conscientiously.

A boy was once asked by his house master whether he felt that confirmation had been of any assistance to him. It had not, but the boy felt that it was up to him to pretend that it had. The house master obviously expected it; it was a social decency, on a par with the assurance to a hostess that one had spent a most delightful evening. The boy was inclined to think that he swore less than he had done. The master's interest was aroused. Where had he learnt to swear? The boy had, of course, acquired this

Public School Life

knowledge in the day room. He realised, however, that this was one of the things that one did not confess. He said he had learnt it from some navvies in the holidays. More questions were asked. 'Oh, yes,' the boy said, 'My people allow me to do more or less what I like. I wander all over the place.' It was quite untrue, but it confirmed the house master in his belief that all the faults of a Public School could be attributed to the ignorance and foolishness of parents. He developed the idea in a letter which he contributed to a well-known weekly.

It is never safe to generalise from a boy's confession, and house masters would do well in such cases to base their conclusions on their own experience and on their previous knowledge of the boy's character. In their investigations, however, of the moral question, there is one motive that they can almost certainly rule out: the motive of strong personal attraction. Such an act would be opposed to the ethics of school society, and a boy only rarely does what he, himself, feels to be wrong.

He is inclined to enter a world of women with the idea that the sexual impulse can only be gratified with a woman he does not love. He realises that in marriage it is necessary for the procreation of children. But he regards it chiefly from his point of view as a 'remedy against sin,' and on the woman's part an act of gracious compliance. It is thus that a man comes to divide women into classes: one's sisters' friends, and the rest. There is little need

Morality and the Romantic Friendship

to elaborate the results of such an attitude. The subject has been discussed exhaustively. On this rock many marriages have been shipwrecked. It can do little in cases of strong mutual feeling. Passion harmonises all things; the rhythm of love takes its own course. But where the woman has not been deeply moved before marriage, where she knows her future husband only slightly, and is timid in his presence, then the preconceived formula of the 'pure girl' will achieve havoc. The woman will sink herself in motherhood, and the man will seek elsewhere diversion. A cynic has remarked that the man who marries a girl because she appeals to his higher nature will spend the rest of his life among those who appeal to his lower nature. And, like all epigrams, that remark presents a facet of the truth. It is now generally accepted that there is no more dangerous heresy than the idea that one does not 'feel like that about a decent girl.' Much has been written on the subject. But the causes of the heresy have not been sufficiently investigated. It is said, 'Boys are badly brought up.' Children, we are told, should be brought to regard their bodies as temples, and there the matter is left.

But this heresy is, I am certain, very largely the natural result of the public school system. It is confined to the upper and upper-middle classes, to those, that is, who have been to Public Schools. The collier and the peasant have no such fanciful illusions. Divorce must naturally be more common in circles where men and women

Public School Life

have leisure to indulge their emotions, where temptations are frequent, where the imagination is most vivid, the longing for the unattainable most acute. But, even so, any student of character cannot but feel that the married lives of public school men are less happy than those of the lower classes.

All through the discussion of this delicate subject I have used marriage as the norm. It includes all other considerations. There are those who are shocked to learn of the existence of immorality in Public Schools, and the socialist press is only too ready for an opportunity of slinging mud at the object of its envy. But, however a boy is brought up, it is unlikely that he would pass unscathed through adolescence. Curiosity is as irresistible as fear. It is the power of the unknown. The moral offences of a public school boy are disgusting enough, but because they are so entirely physical they have little lasting effect on him. They play indeed a very casual part in his life. Nothing is at stake. The romantic friendship, on the other hand, is the dawn of love; it is a delicate and deep emotion; it is the most exciting thing that up to then has happened to a boy; it touches his senses and his soul. And, because he experiences this emotion for the first time in an unnatural environment, his natural reaction is misdirected and misinformed. It is important that we should find some remedy.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MIDDLE YEARS

DESMOND COKE has described in *The Bending of a Twig*, the middle years of a public school career as being slow to pass, but swift in retrospect. He devoted two chapters to them—'See-saw down' and 'See-saw up.' And those chapter headings convey more clearly than a long analysis the nature of that period. To begin with it is 'See-saw down.' The boy is confused with his new-found liberty; the future stretches endlessly before him. There is plenty of time. There is no need for hurry. And so he rags and wastes his time and makes, on the whole, a pretty general nuisance of himself. His house reports are worse at the end of every term. His parents grow worried; they remember the bright promise of that first term: the prize, the promotion, the glowing panegyric. The arrival of the blue envelope during the second week of the holidays is the occasion of considerable domestic stress. On such a morning one remembers that one has promised to spend the day with a friend at Richmond.

And then suddenly, when the revel is at its height, some chance incident or conversation forces a boy to realise that he has not so much time as he had thought, that the weeks are

Public School Life

passing, that, already, the end has drawn close to him. Clifford Bax, in one of his many beautiful poems, has described a man's first appreciation of the approach of age.

'There is a certain mid-way hour in life
Which startles every man, when the tide
turns
And, wave on wave, we hear death coming on.'

In the same way the boy discovers that the half of his schooldays are at an end, that he has put them to little use. And, as the temporal quality of life drives the epicurean to gather with what eager haste he may, flowers that for him will soon have blossomed, the sense of passing days defines and directs for the school-boy the course of ambition. It is perhaps the first moment of conscious thought, of objective reasoning. The days of unreflecting action are at an end. He is no longer a child playing in a nursery. He is a man, subject to the laws of time and space, a mortal man aware of his mortality.

Now this sudden change, which partakes of the nature of a conversion, owes its existence, as often as not, to some perfectly trivial occurrence. The stage is not set appropriately. There is no long heart to heart talk with a schoolmaster, a parent, or a friend at the end of which the boy leaps to his feet, claps his hand to his forehead, and exclaims: 'I see the evil of my ways.' Such dramatic moments, I suppose, take place occasionally, but they are the exception. The

boy has reached that stage of his development when the idea of time can become an actuality to him, and some quite casual incident will bring this actuality before him.

It is possible, of course, that this reformation may be effected by a conversation. But it will be an unrehearsed effect. One is walking down to hall, and, through the open door of the changing room overhears some uncomplimentary statement of one's worth. The statement need not be made by a particular friend. Indeed, it will probably be more effective if it is not. We accept with composure the criticisms of our friends, our relatives, our enemies. Wherever there is an intimate relationship there is friction. We know that, at times, we must be intensely annoying to our friends, because they are at times so intensely annoying to ourselves. Little tricks, traits of character, intonations of the voice that we should hardly notice in those to whom we are indifferent, exasperate us in those for whom we care. We expect our friends at times to say nasty things about us. We are too conscious of our own delinquencies. But impersonal criticism is unpleasant; it is like an unfavourable review that is unsigned. If we cannot reassure ourselves with the knowledge that our assailant is either jealous of us or dislikes us, or thinks we pay too many attentions to his wife; if, that is to say, we can detect in this criticism no ulterior motive, but simply a dispassionate impersonal disapproval of ourselves and of our work, then we do indeed

Public School Life

feel that the need for drastic self-criticism is immediate.

When, therefore, Jones on his way down to hall overhears Ferguson, who is in another form, who has never been brought into contact with him, who has no possible reason for feeling envious or jealous, remark that Jones is the sort of fellow whom the house could get on very well without, he goes quickly to his study and communes with himself.

At the beginning of my third year at school, when I was very happy, very light-hearted, very boisterous, and, I suppose, rather obnoxious generally, I was standing at the counter of the tuck shop waiting to be served with a poached egg and a sausage. I experienced considerable difficulty in catching the eye of the waitress, and for the better announcing of my presence I took a knife out of the basket and beat it upon the zinc covering of the counter. The waitress, who was harassed by the number of orders, turned round impatiently: 'Oh, do be quiet, Mr. Waugh,' she said, 'I don't know what's come over you lately. You used to be such a nice quiet boy when you first came.' Several people laughed, but her remark was a shock to me. I had not the slightest romantic interest in her. I did not care greatly what opinion she held of my moral worth, but I had not before realised that it was possible for a change of which I was myself ignorant to take place within me, that a process of degeneration could take its slow effect, altering me in the eyes of others,

leaving me unaltered in my own, that, like rust on iron, environment could corrode temperament. That chance remark had a most profound effect on me. It gave me a sudden insight into the secret forces that lie under the surface of life. I do not know whether from the outside I appeared afterwards a different person. One cannot focus the impression one has of oneself and the impression one makes on others. But to myself I know that I was different. And some such revelation invariably comes to a boy during his period of school life.

In novels and stories we attribute it to some emotional crisis. The reason of the change is less important than that there should be change, and that the reader should be able to realise that for such a change there was a reason. But, actually, the reason is usually trivial enough. It may be that a boy's pride has been rebuffed; some one has got a house cap before him. He begins to reassure himself with the old dope: 'There is plenty of time. It doesn't matter. I'll catch him later on.' But for once the old dope does not work. He realises with a shock that there is less time than he had thought. He has allowed his rival to get too far ahead. A house cap is only two stages distant from a first. He may not have time to catch him up. In the light of the discovery he revises his whole career. He asks himself whither he is drifting. He sees that he has passed beyond the stage of a vague promise into one of definite rivalry and achievement.

Public School Life

The prospects of the beginner are always golden. His wares are not yet for sale in the open market. He has not entered into competition with his contemporaries. A young professional makes a century during his first month of first-class cricket and is immediately the object of generous enthusiasm. The reporter can write of him as ecstatically as he will. The professional has not yet reached representative cricket. At school a slow left-hand bowler takes eight wickets for twenty-seven in a house match. He is spoken of at once as the coming man. For another season he will continue to take wickets in house matches to the delight of every one. Then he will enter the lists of representative cricket. He will play on uppers, and it will have to be decided, not whether he is a good slow left-hand bowler, but whether he is better than Evans in Buller's, and Morrison in Wilkes's. It is so easy to say of a boy of fifteen: 'Some day he will be captain of the house.' We can all of us exclaim at the beginning of a Marathon: 'What a beautiful runner that fellow is.' It is after ten miles have been run and the runners have sorted themselves out that the real race begins. It is the appreciation of this moment that ends the 'see-saw down' period and sees the start of the 'see-saw up.'

It must not be imagined, however, that this process of see-saw up involves a complete moral, spiritual, and intellectual reformation; it sometimes does; more usually it means that the schoolboy looks at the same life from a

different angle. His standards, his scale of values remain unaltered. He feels that he has not adjusted himself properly to their demands. He has been making an ass of himself: he has been ragging about, he has allowed opportunities to slip past him. 'It won't do,' he tells himself. 'I must stop all this. I must settle down.'

Such a resolution involves, to a certain extent, an appreciation of imminent responsibilities; a boy realises that a series of desperate escapades will prejudice his prospects of prefectship; it often results in the exchange of a positive for a negative manner of life. The Sixth Former, the potential scholar of Balliol, is spurred by such an experience to really hard work. For him a turning-point has been reached. It is different, however, for the second eleven colour who has reached the Lower Fifth after three years of spasmodic cribbing. He has been in the past a free-lance, an irresponsible ragster. He decides that the time has come for him to settle down. If the Lower Fifth is, as it often is, a comfortable backwater, he is content to rest there. He sits on a back bench, and plays an occasional part in the life of the form. While he was a ragster he had to work. A well-prepared lesson was his armour. Now that he no longer rags he need no longer work; he is content to be inoffensive, agreeable, somnolent. He considers that between himself and his form master there is an unwritten pact by which each agrees to leave the other alone. It is as though he said:

Public School Life

'Your time, Mr. Featherbrain, is fully occupied between the ragsters and the industrious. You have to keep a constant watch upon the ragster. You have to teach the industrious. That is a whole-time job. Why worry about me? You need not keep a watch upon me. It is agreed that I shall do no ragging. And why try to teach me anything. Your energies are wasted upon me. I don't want to learn anything. You may lead a horse to the water, you know. Why worry yourself and me! There are all those other fellows who want to learn.' And the master, usually, signs the contract. He is a busy man. The temptation is very great. He excuses himself in the common room by speaking of 'fellows like dear old Thomas; good-natured chaps, but with absolutely no brains. Latin and Greek are flung away on them. But they'll make fine empire builders.' And so the boy who has settled down spends the greater part of his day wool-gathering in vacuous laziness. To nothing that happens between chapel and lunch can he bring the least enthusiasm. His thoughts are fixed on the more thrilling encounters of the football field. His whole life, indeed, is centred on sport, and on the most entertaining methods he can discover for the better employing of his spare time. All his energy, all his enthusiasm, is concentrated into one, or perhaps two, focuses. It is not surprising that he should become tolerably proficient at games and a source of moral anxiety to prefects and house masters.

Is the pursuit of athletic success a sufficiently engrossing occupation for such a boy? That is the question that a house master unconsciously puts to himself. He must put it to himself, but his attitude to this particular type of boy is based on a non-committal answer to this question: the answer—'Perhaps; but it's up to you.' The house master, therefore, does all in his power to persuade the boy that the acquiring of a First Fifteen cap is his immediate object in life. He will not state his case in words; but he will omit the uncomfortable topic of form work in conversations, and discuss at length the prospects of the house in the senior matches. If he does not succeed in directing the entire energy of the boy on games, the results of such a failure may be disastrous. A fellow of seventeen who has nothing particular to do is bound to find himself in mischief. This fact is realised by both parents and house masters, and those boys who are good neither at games nor work usually leave at about this period. It is the falling out of the unsuccessful runner in a long race. It is no good going on. The leaders are too far ahead. The gap between the senior and the junior is thus considerably increased. The stepping-stones have been removed. A boy of eighteen at the start of his last year sees very few of his contemporaries sitting at the Sixth Form table. Of the eight or nine boys who came there with him, only three are left, and the Fifth Form table is filled by fellows two or three years junior to himself, with whom he has but

Public School Life

a slight acquaintance. It is always the 'blood' who is asked to stop on that extra year. The insignificant are encouraged by silence to retire.

'Thou shalt not kill, yet needst not strive
Officiously to keep alive.'

By the time the boy comes to be a prefect he is able to feel himself supreme, not only because of the system that is at his back.

CHAPTER IX

PREFECTSHIP

PREFECTSHIP is the coping-stone of a public school education. The boy who leaves without becoming a prefect has missed, we are continually assured, the most important part of his school career. And yet what percentage of an old boys' list, I wonder, reaches the dignity of house prefectship. One gets the impression sometimes that every one, provided he stays on long enough, becomes a prefect. All school stories follow a convention. They open with the new boy closing behind him the green-baize door of the head master's study, gazing wistfully down a long corridor at the end of which is the oak door of the day room. From behind that door comes to him the sound of laughter and eager conversation. There is the unknown, mysterious world he has to enter. That is how every school story opens. And every school story closes on the departure of a hero crowned with athletic and academic honours. The space in between is occupied with the 'see-saw up' process. How else a school story is to be constructed I do not know. It has to be narrative rather than dramatic. But it gives the impression that public school life for the average boy is a slow voyage from fag to prefect. Indeed, if *Peg's Paper* printed

Public School Life

school stories, 'From Fag to Prefect' would probably be the title. Such a tale would, however, be little more generally applicable than a tale of army life entitled 'From Bugler to Brigadier.' The majority of schoolboys do not become prefects. But the people in whose hands the framing of the convention lies think they do, because they did themselves. The dwellers in Mayfair think London consists of a few drawing-rooms and a few restaurants. The schoolmaster naturally follows the conventional course, otherwise he would not be a schoolmaster. If he had not reached the Upper Sixth he would not be in a position to teach. If he had not reached the Eleven he would not be a games master. The story-writer may not be an athlete, but it is hardly possible that a man who can write an interesting book should have failed to make some mark at school if he had stayed out his full time. And so there has grown up a tendency to ignore entirely the careers of the insignificant, which form the background for more striking exploits. And yet, as always, the insignificant are in the majority.

A couple of years ago I spent an afternoon in the company of some friends at the school where their son was completing his second term. It was a warm afternoon and we naturally walked down to the cricket field. On the Upper a senior house match, which we should have liked to have watched, was in progress. Our small guide assured us, however, that this would be impossible. 'It isn't our house, you see, and

the fellows would think it awful niff of me to watch another house playing. But there's a house game of our own going on down there.' Realising that it was impossible to overcome the novice's fear of doing the wrong thing, we reluctantly, slowly, and with backward glances, followed our young friend to the far end of a big field, where a ridiculous junior house game was being played on a sloping and bumping pitch. The small boy was, however, more interested in his friends than in the cricket. Beyond this game there was the pick up.

Now I do not believe that I had ever before watched a pick up at all closely. I had imagined that the cricket would be pretty bad, that firm-footed batsmen would mow full pitches towards long on, that wides would be only more frequent than the fall of wickets, that every third scoring stroke would be in the nature of a chance. I had never, however, anticipated anything approaching the complete impotence of that game. The batsmen could not hit the ball hard, indeed it was only on rare occasions that they managed to connect the bat with the ball. There was no need for any fieldsmen, with the possible exception of long-stop, to stand more than twenty-five yards from the wicket. The bowler's main object appeared to be the keeping down of wides. Every game has its own technique; this game was certainly not cricket as it is played generally, and, no doubt, the victorious side was the one that bowled fewest wides. For no other reason would any captain have

Public School Life

kept on either of those two bowlers for a second over.

And I could not help wondering what a public school career stood for in the lives of those pitifully ineffectual cricketers. It is possible that one or two of them might be brilliant scholars, or that a few played football successfully, though this I am prepared to doubt; for the true sportsman is self-declared the moment that he walks on to a field. It seemed to me incredible that any one who had played any game successfully could tolerate the miserable travesty of sport that was being enacted on that sloping, bumping pitch. But even if there were a few exceptions, even if one or two were destined for privilege and authority and a name upon the honour boards, the fate of the majority was certain. They would remain inconspicuous, belonging to that large tribe of those whose names on the old boys' list are vaguely familiar to us, but with whom we can connect not one incident, anecdote, or conversation. They pass and they leave no mark behind them. They never rise to a position of responsibility. They never learn to wield authority. They never acquire, that is to say, those qualities of administration that have made English rule so tolerant and so universally respected. What can public school life mean to such as these? I put the question, but I cannot answer it. I do not know. Public school life is designed as a slow voyage from fag to prefectship, and, even if only a minority complete that voyage, it is the

process and the stages of that voyage we have here to represent and interpret. It should, however, be here set on record that, be the advantages or disadvantages of the public school system what they may, a great many public school boys never partake of them.

From the distance of early years the obligations of prefectship seems slight in comparison with their enormous privileges. A prefect does not have to answer his name at roll; he can wander round the studies without leave during hall. He has fags to clean his study, to wash his plates, to light his fire, to carry his books down to chapel in the morning. He can inflict punishment without being liable to it. The new boy who has recently been caned, in his opinion most unjustly, for whispering in prayers, looks forward to his day of revenge. The life of a prefect must be free from all the cares that so perplex him. Prefects can never be troubled with impositions and imperfectly prepared exercises. He glances up to the Sixth Form table and contemplates the majesty of Meredith with his neatly-tied tie, and hair brushed back immaculately from his forehead. What master would have the cheek to 'bottle' Meredith? The very idea is unthinkable. Meredith has the invulnerable infallibility of a god. The small boy reconsiders this view as he rises in the school. The horizon narrows. But even when he reaches the Sixth Form table he sees prefectship in terms of freedom rather than of service. And it would, of course, be absurd to maintain that the

Public School Life

obligations outweigh the privileges. They do not: but they are none the less considerable. If a prefect is found playing the ass, ragging in the studies, or cutting lock up, he would be neither lined nor beaten; but the twenty minutes interview with the Chief would be far worse than any caning. He would feel humbled, he would feel thoroughly ashamed of himself, he would have done a rotten thing. Punishments have ceased to be a pawn in a game between boy and master. And, when a prefect realises this, he realises also that this particular game is finished.

The degree to which a prefect appreciates his obligation, depends a good deal on the way his house master treats him. The boy who is trusted usually proves himself worthy of that trust. I do not mean in everything. If a master says to a boy: 'Now, Jones, I am going to let you prepare your lessons in your study in future. I trust you to work,' Jones feels himself under no obligation to work. By going to his study he is sparing the master the irksome duty of supervision. That is a fair bargain. He has saved the master work and the master has saved him work. In matters of form work a boy will never cease to regard his relationship with his master as that of the hunter and hunted. He will find when he reaches the Sixth Form that instead of being told to prepare fifty lines of Virgil, he is expected to prepare as much work as is possible in the time at his disposal. If, when put on to construe in form he states

as an excuse for an unsuccessful effort, that the fifty line limit has been passed, he will be handled roughly: 'My dear Evans,' the head master will say, 'you have ceased to be in the Lower Fourth. You don't work to scale. If you haven't had time to prepare the passage, say so, and I won't put you on, but whatever you do don't bring forward that middle school excuse about fifty lines.' The new arrival will look abashed, but he will not feel that he has been put upon his honour to do an hour's work every night. He may possibly prepare next time, with the aid of a crib, an extra dozen lines, but he will do it as quickly as he can.

He feels differently, however, about what happens outside the class-room. When an excuse is accepted because he is a prefect that would not be accepted without a long cross-examination were he not a prefect, a boy considers himself to have been put on his honour. I will give an example. The O.T.C. was, with us, practically compulsory; ninety-seven per cent. of the school was in it, and that three per cent. was garrisoned with doctors' certificates. Like all compulsory things it was extremely unpopular. We used to employ elaborate devices to get leave off. In break we used to visit the matron and suggest that our health required some castor oil. If possible we would retain the dose in our mouths till we got safely into the passage and then deposit it in our handkerchiefs. When this was impossible we swallowed it. A dose alone was not a sufficient excuse. We had to

Public School Life

assume faintness, sickness, or some other indisposition during afternoon school. It was an intricate business that rarely proved successful. The authorities were prepared for it. Corps Parade was on Friday, and one Friday after I had become a prefect, I decided that never before had I felt less like doing squad drill. I had a headache, I had not finished my Latin Prose, we were playing Dulwich the next day and I was anxious to be as fresh as possible. I had also very, very slightly twisted my ankle. Remembering my courage in the days of castor oil I thought it worth making an attempt to get leave off. On this occasion I went to the head master.

I informed him of my injury, and was about to embark on a lengthy explanation of the accident when the head master cut me short. 'Oh, yes, Waugh, of course, that'll be quite all right. I hope you'll be fit for to-morrow.' I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself. Because I was a prefect, my word had been accepted without examination and without proof. I was trusted to tell the truth. And yet I actually had produced as feeble an excuse as a fellow in the Lower Fourth. I went on parade that afternoon, and from then onwards I never tried to get off anything unless I was absolutely certain that I could have got off it without the influence of prefectship. And whatever may be urged against the inflated opinion of himself that the power to exert authority may give a boy, I can only believe that this sense of duty, this obligation to be true

to himself is an invaluable experience. It comes out in all sorts of ways. I remember an old colour once telling me at the end of the season that he had not enjoyed his cricket half as much as he had the previous year. I was surprised. 'I should have thought you'd have enjoyed it much more,' I said; 'you have had to worry about your colours; you've been certain of your place; you've been able to play whatever sort of game you liked.'

'That's just what I have not been able to do,' he replied. 'Last year I was a free-lance. I took risks. I had a dip when I wanted to and when we played unimportant matches against the town and the regiment, I thought more about hitting a couple of sixes than making big score. But I can't do that now. I'm captain of my house. I spend half my evenings trying to persuade those young asses in the juniorside that seven singles between cover and mid-off are of more use to the side than the magnificent six. If they see me going in and chucking away my wicket in a school match they'd think me a pretty sort of captain, wouldn't they? I've got to set an example of sorts. And, though the captious may maintain that it would have been more to the point if that particular sportsman had worried a little less about the example he was setting on the cricket field and a little more about the example he was setting in the form room and the studies, virtue is virtue wheresoever it is found and in whatsoever garb it is adorned. It is a good thing to feel that

Public School Life

an example has to be set and to decide to set it. It is the high privilege of service.

There are occasions when the setting of example grows not only irksome, but pointless. Throughout one winter my whole dormitory and myself subjected ourselves to the miseries of a freezing cold bath because neither party had the face to own itself defeated. In the first warm day of October the whole house ran cheerily to the shower bath down a long passage that faced east and was filled with sunlight. But when the November frosts came on, the long run down the passage in bare feet with a small towel gathered round our loins became increasingly unattractive. By the time we reached the bath we were thoroughly cold and the zinc tubs under the cascade of water were not enticing. Each morning fewer feet pattered down the passage. But my dormitory maintained its courage. As long as I went on having a bath I knew that they would go on having one, and as long as they went on having one I knew that I should have to also. There were mornings when I longed to say: 'Look here, you fellows, you don't want to have a bath. Nor do I. Let's chuck it.' The words were sometimes on the tip of my tongue. But just as I was about to utter them some one would rise from his bed, reluctantly divest himself of his pyjamas, wrap a towel round himself, and run out into the passage. After that retreat was hopeless. The thing had to be seen through. Not one of us missed his bath throughout the term.

It may have been good for us: I don't know. Most things that are supposed to be are unpleasant.

As so often happens with preconceived ideas, the only duties of prefectship which present any terrors to the imagination of the new boy turn out singularly simple. Most boys are self-conscious; they dread a silence, they hate being conspicuous. They regard, therefore, the taking of hall and the reading of the house list at roll as terrible ordeals. They are not so really. One is a little nervous lest the pitch of one's voice may sound curious as one shouts out the name of the top boy on the list: but it doesn't: not unless one is very odd. And the taking of hall is simple, unless one goes down there with an established reputation for inefficiency. In such a case the prefect does stand a poor look-out, as poor a look-out as the master who has proved himself weak. But such reputations are not easily acquired, and the possessors of them are well advised to bribe some hardier colleague to take their places. No attempt is made to rag the average prefect. He goes down on his first night fully prepared to inflict a violent punishment on any harbinger of insubordination. He may even carry down with him his swagger stick as a cautionary signal. But it is unlikely that he will be called upon to use it. The chief embarrassment, indeed, of taking hall is the importunities of small boys who come and ask one to help them with their translation. One hums and hahs, looks at the notes and the

Public School Life

vocabulary and discovers how extremely hard it is to translate Livy without a crib.

To a great extent the proficiency of the prefectorial system depends on the house master. If prefects admire and respect their house master, the tone of the house will almost certainly be a good one. If they dislike him the tone may very likely be a good one. It is a toss up. Dislike and fear often go together. And a prefect who dislikes, and thinks he is disliked, by his house master may very well decide out of affronted dignity to perform his duties thoroughly. 'The old beast hates me,' he says; 'he thinks I'm no good. I'll jolly well show him!' Dislike is, at any rate, a positive emotion. It will produce something. Nothing, on the other hand, is more fatal than the sort of genial, indifferent good-natured friendship that so often exists between a house master and his prefects.

In Chowdler, G. F. Bradly has drawn just such a house master. Chowdler pretends to be the elder brother: he talks of 'good old Jones' and 'dear old Joe.' He has the prefects up in his study for heart to heart manly talks. And the prefects listen, agree with what he says, echo, when they speak, his own sentiments, and generally hoodwink him. They treat him as he treats them. They call him 'good old Chowdler,' and leave it at that. When there is a conscientious and an officious head of the house things go fairly quietly; when the head of the house is a lazy, sociable creature, the house runs itself, and with results that would cause little

pleasure were they published to the mandarins of the common room. No new house master, Arnold Lunn says, has to face a more difficult task than he whose predecessor has earned the reputation of being a sport. The house master who always announces to the head boy his intention of visiting the studies is popular enough, but he has a rotten house.

Yet, however badly the prefectorial system may on occasions work, it is impossible to dispense with it. It is not so much the need for a heavy hand as the need for a scapegoat. Some one must be responsible to the supreme authority for any disturbance that may take place. If a house master enters the day room during 'prep.' and finds that an impromptu concert is in progress, he knows that it would be impossible for him to disentangle the muddled evidence of interested witnesses. He could never find out what it was all about, how it started, who started it, what happened next. He makes, therefore, one person responsible for the maintenance of order in the day room during 'prep.' He puts a house prefect there on duty. When, therefore, he interrupts an unseemly brawl, he does not concern himself with the incidents of the affair; Brown's face may be plastered with red ink, the head of Evans may be slowly extricating itself from the wastepaper basket, Ferguson may be withdrawing a battered compass from the unprotected quarters of an enemy. He does not notice that. He does not punish Brown and Ferguson and Evans. He asks the prefect in charge for

Public School Life

an explanation. If the explanation is not satisfactory that prefect is relieved of office. It is the knowledge of this fate that inspires the industry of prefects.

This system is the basis for all administration, for the delegation of all responsibility. It rarely fails. When I shared a study with another prefect we divided eight fags between us. The best of these eight we appointed fag-master. 'You will do no fagging yourself, Marston,' we told him. 'To each of the other seven fags will be allotted one day of the week. You will see that they do their job. If the fire goes out, you will be beaten.' During the whole of that winter our fire never went out once. It is a regrettable fact, but a true one, that human beings will only work under the influence of a bribe, or of a threat. In the wide world it is usually a bribe. One may not threaten the foreman of an oil works. He has his union behind him. But there are no trade unions for fags: a judicious threat works wonders. And, when all other forces weaken, the wish to retain office helps the prefect to his task. Were there no prefects, no scapegoats, there would be no order. They are the exchange of hostages.

Suppose an attempt was made to run a house without them? how long do you imagine that it would last? Five days, six days, a week? Yes, perhaps as long as that: not longer: certainly I would not give it longer than a week. Such an experiment might be tried at the end of a long and unsatisfactory term during which several

of the prefects had, at some time or another, come into collision with official ruling. And the climax might have been reached, shall we say, on the last Tuesday of the term, when the head of the house was discovered during 'prep.' playing the organ in the big school.

Next day, after lunch, the house would be astonished by the following announcement: 'I don't know,' the house master would say, 'whether I approve of the prefectorial system or not—that's neither here nor there. At any rate it has not worked well with my present set of prefects, and, for the rest of the term I propose to dispense with them. I shall occupy during preparation the small study at the end of the passage, and the house tutor will supervise preparation in the day room. I shall occupy the small single dormitory by the fire escape. That is all.' It is possible, is it not, as the sudden resolution of an overworked, exasperated man who had not paused to consider the results of his decision.

Well, what would happen then? We can guess to a certain extent. It is, at least, a subject of interesting speculation. What would happen to a house that had no prefects?

For a couple of days all would go smoothly, I imagine. The house would behave like a whipped dog. Its tail would be tucked between its legs. The prefects would make an ineffectual stand upon their dignity. Then the possibilities of the situation would become apparent. Authority spreads a veneer over the boisterous spirits

Public School Life

of a boy of eighteen. But at heart he remains a ragster. In a couple of years' time, as an undergraduate or a medical student he will be destroying furniture and organising preposterous bonfires. And, when authority is taken from him, he feels once again the old itch to enter the lists, to try one last throw with the marshalled forces of officialdom. It may, for instance, occur to Morcombe, the head of the house, that, though he has ceased to be a house prefect, he remains a school prefect, and that, outside the precincts of his house, he is still a force. When, therefore, he sees Jones mi. flinging stones against the cloisters, he orders Jones to appear before him that evening after roll. It is after roll, during the silence of first hall, that punishments are inflicted. And, that night, the house master, sitting in his narrow study at the end of the passage, will be astonished to hear the silence broken by a series of resounding bangs. He hurries down the passage and discovers Jones mi. straightening himself beside the water pipes, one hand ruefully stroking his trousers, while the head of the house proudly surveying his handiwork, delivers a last word of admonishment and taps his cane against his boots.

'But what on earth, Morcombe, is the meaning of this?' says the house master.

'I had occasion, sir, to beat a boy.'

'But you've no right to beat a boy. You're not a prefect any longer.'

'I was punishing him, sir, for a school and

not a house offence. He was throwing stones against the cloisters. As a school prefect I felt myself bound to take official notice of his action.'

'But you know quite well, Morcombe,' the house master would answer hotly, 'that you've no right to do anything of the sort. You are only quibbling.'

'Then am I to understand, sir, that I have ceased to be a school prefect.'

'You are to understand you have no authority over any one in this house.'

'But that will make it difficult for me, sir; if I were to discover a boy in this house and a boy in another house smoking on a Sunday afternoon, I should be able to order the boy from another house to put out his cigarette and return to school at once, but the boy in my own house I should have to leave where he was. It would be suggested that I was favouring my own house.'

It is unlikely that the house master will have a reply; he will order Morcombe to return to his study and to cease being impertinent. It depends on the courage of Morcombe and the respect he has for his house master whether five minutes later there will be a tap on the door of the narrow study at the end of the passage and a quiet voice will ask: 'Please, sir, I hope you'll excuse my worrying you, but I am not quite certain whether you said I was, or was not, a school prefect. You see, sir, it's my turn to read the lessons in chapel to-morrow. I wondered

Public School Life

whether I ought to run round and tell the head master that I am no longer privileged to read them.'

There will be several such imbroglios.

Whether or not the term will end without an actual conflagration is problematic. On the whole I should say that the chances were even. It is the end of the term. Spirits run high, constant supervision is impossible. On the last morning but one, for instance, there is no early chapel. There is a long lie in bed. The house master will return to his own part of the house to shave, bathe himself, and dress. There is no one left in the dormitories with any authority. Every one is good-tempered and excited with a surplus store of animal spirits. There is a lively exchange of compliments which terminate in a pillow being flung across the room. There is a moment's nervous hush. The power of the prefectorial system dies hard: a week ago such an act would have been dealt with instantly and severely. And, even now, a single word would be sufficient to restore order.

But the prefect takes no notice. He sees no reason why he should exert himself in the interests of one who considers his services to be of no further use to him. He feels justifiably aggrieved. The house master considers he can run the house himself—well then, let him run it. He has asked for no assistance from his prefects. He can therefore expect none. The pillow is returned. It is inaccurately flung, however, and the contents of a water jug streams across the floor. Again

there is a brief embarrassment. But the prefect reassures his dormitory.

'My dear fellows, don't worry about me,' he says, 'I have no authority over you. There is no need for you to take the slightest notice of anything I say or do. Indeed I'm not at all certain that I shan't take a hand in it. Ferrers, you brute, take that.'

And with the sudden flick of the forearm that in the cricket field had proved so disastrous to the batsman who had risked a short run to cover, the unerring discharge of a pillow has prostrated the startled Ferrers. From that moment mischief is afoot. It takes what course it will. And that course will probably involve the overturning of a good many jugs, the stripping of innumerable beds, the splitting of several pillows. In a brief while the air will be filled with feathers, the floor with mattresses and soaking sheets. And when, an hour later, the house master is summoned by an indignant matron to view the battlefield, who will be held responsible? To whose account is he to debit the broken jugs and the torn pillows? Whom can he deprive of office? He will, no doubt, collect the house in his study; every one will spend the last day inscribing a georgic or an eclogue. But the house will feel that it has triumphed. What, after all, can the house master say? If he begins to criticise Morcombe the reply is obvious.

'But I tried to stop it, sir, I did my best. But they wouldn't take any notice of me, sir. I had no authority over them.'

Public School Life

If the house master is wise he will say as little as possible. He will announce the punishment, and the next term place more trust in his prefects. However bad an individual set of prefects may be, without them things would be a good deal worse.

S. P. B. Mais in his first, and perhaps best, book dealing with Public Schools, devoted a chapter to the various types of prefects, the effect that office had on each type, and the use each type made of its privileges. He maintained that certain types were unfitted for authority, and that no boy who had not a view of life that passed beyond the limits of school should be given such authority. That is no doubt the ideal, but it is impracticable. A house master has to make the most of the material at his disposal: if he is dissatisfied he must blame himself. He has had his five years in which to fashion the malleable substance to his fancy. If a boy is high in form and a school colour and has been several years in the house, it is impossible to pass him over in favour of a junior boy who is lower in form and a less successful athlete. Prefectship has to go by seniority. The moment it was felt that office went to the boys in whom the house master happened to have most faith, the word 'favouritism' would be run like a corroding poison through the system of the house. The favourite would be universally distrusted and disliked. A certain class of boy would develop the 'conspiracy complex' that every hand was against him, and, in time, he would

become what he imagined others took him for.

Such a system would encourage endless sycophancy. If the house master were married, his wife would play too large a part in the politics of his house. There would be those who would not hesitate to ingratiate themselves with her in the hope that at the critical moment her influence might turn the scales in their favour.

When a boy whom his house master dislikes reaches the point where, in course of seniority he would have to be made a prefect, the house master has only two courses open: either he must make the boy a prefect, or he must write to the father saying, though he has nothing definite against his son, he does not feel that he is the sort of boy who ought to be made a prefect, and he must ask the father, therefore, to remove his son from the school at the end of the summer.

He can do nothing else. He cannot keep on a boy whose claims he has passed over deliberately and without cause. What house master, on the other hand, is going to write such a letter to a parent. The parent is bound to object. He will appeal to the head master.

'You have nothing against my son,' he will say. 'During the four years he has been at school he has never been in any serious trouble. He has worked hard and he has played hard. I have always regarded prefectship as the crown of a public school education. I sent my son to you rather than to some other educational establishment because I wished him to have the

Public School Life

invaluable experience of being a prefect in a Public School. And now, at the end, when he has reached this position, you say, without giving any reason, that he is not a fit person to occupy it. It is scandalous.'

And even were the head master to endorse his subaltern's verdict, were he to say: 'That is all very true, Mr Evans, but a house master is the best judge of the type of boy that he wants to have as a prefect. I am very sorry, but we must abide by his decision,' the reputation of the school would suffer.

Old boys would discuss the verdict in their clubs.

'That's no school for my son,' they would say. 'Prefectship depends on the caprice of a house master. And, if by the time one gets high in the house, one's told one's got to go—why, if that had happened in my case I know I'd never have become captain of the Eleven. My house master would have got rid of me long before I had got my colours.'

Gray heads would shake seriously over the port; the numbers of the school would sink. Seniority may, now and again, bring most unsuitable persons to authority, but it is a far more satisfactory system than any that would be based on the choice and dislike of one person.

Certainly many unlikely people reach the high-backed chair of the Sixth Form table. And a house master must often wonder how will taste the strange stew that is simmering—a compound of so many unknown ingredients.

In spite of experience, he is always guessing. But the changes are less considerable than might be expected, or it would be truer to say, perhaps, that the changes follow a more or less ordinary course.

A boy's attitude on reaching office is ordered by what he has read and by example. The ragster usually becomes a martinet. He has read of the reformation of Prince Hal; the epigram about Kildare ruling all Ireland is the one piece of Elizabethan history that his memory has retained. How nice he feels it will be to surprise every one. What a shock it will be to his old companions. Every one must have said of him: 'Oh, Park'll be all right. He's such a ragster himself, he's sure to go pretty easy!' In his first week, therefore, he canes a quite senior boy for playing the piano too loudly in the changing room. He becomes in a short while extremely unpopular and a general terror. If on the start of the school year one were asked to tell which of the new prefects one would be best advised to avoid, one would almost certainly place one's finger on the boy who had been most frequently in trouble during the previous term.

There is no sign, however, by which we can detect the officious type of prefect who speaks solemnly of his responsibilities and makes life extremely unpleasant for his house and for his old companions. It is impossible to tell on whom this germ is going to settle. It need not be the reformed rake: perhaps because rakes reform so seldom. It is not necessarily the religious boy,

Public School Life

or the intellectual boy. But on some one that germ is sure to settle, and it is of all the germs the most annoying.

There is nothing more exasperating than the officious prefect. On the third evening of the term he walks into the study of a former associate, looks confoundedly uncomfortable, seats himself on the table, and then, after a moment's embarrassed silence, permits his features to assume an expression of austere dignity, and says:—

‘Jones, you confided in me two terms ago a little secret, you’ll remember what it was. Well, I feel that it is my unpleasant duty, now that I am a prefect, to report this matter to the head of the house. He will take what action he thinks fit.’

Jones sits back in his chair, a look of horrified disgust upon his face.

‘But, my dear fellow,’ he says, ‘you couldn’t possibly—I mean I told you that in confidence. You couldn’t be such a sneak!’

The prefect would shake his head.

‘You do not understand. It is not sneaking. You would not call it sneaking on the part of a policeman if he arrested an old friend whom he found breaking into a house. This is an official duty that has nothing to do with our personal relationship.’

Jones is tempted to say that in another minute personal relationships will have a good deal to do with the matter, but he appreciates the necessity for tact. He talks, he argues, he cajoles; his patience is tried to the last degree. It is

difficult to discuss a matter on grounds of personal and practical expediency when the other party refuses to desert the platform of high morality. In the end probably Jones is promised silence in return for reformation, and, as the door closes behind his old friend, he murmurs: 'Put not your trust in princes.'

The officious prefect is not content with the exposure of confidences received during his period of probation, he endeavours to unearth present scandals, and this is a point on which popular opinion is very strong. The moral tone of the house is not considered to be the concern of the house prefect. That is the province of the house master and the head boy.

The position of the head boy is a little difficult to define. He is the intermediary between mortality and Olympus. He is supposed to be above suspicion. He is the only person who is allowed to do anything out of 'a sense of duty.' If a house prefect interferes in the private affairs of another, an ulterior motive is always suggested, and the suggestion is probably justified. Whether or not a head boy is justified in unearthing scandal is an open point. There are those who will maintain that he should only take notice of what actually hits him in the face. The reason being that what hits the head of the house in the face will, sooner or later, inflict a similar shock to the physiognomy of the house master. And this should be avoided. In the first place, the house master will lose his high opinion of his head boy; in the second, a scandal that

Public School Life

might have been prevented will reach official notice.

Indeed, there are not a few who will go so far as to assert that the function of a head boy is that of the taster, the impersonal critic who says: 'No, that is going too far.' He is the aeroplane photograph of a strategic position, that shows what gun emplacements are obvious and which are not. And, according to this line of argument, head boys should only concern themselves with the obvious; what was not apparent to them would certainly not be apparent to a house master; there is no need for them to play at Sherlock Holmes.

But this is a point on which the vote has not been taken. There are several schools of thought: all schools of thought are, however, joined in the denial of the right of the head boy to report to the house master anything save a case of insubordination or disloyalty on the part of a brother prefect. A head boy, it is felt, should be able to deal with the discipline and conduct of the house himself. To report is to confess a failure.

To the house prefect no such fine shades of motive are ascribed. He is not considered to be above suspicion, and he is allowed to indulge certain corresponding weaknesses. His business is to see that order is kept; the new prefect forms numberless resolutions. He is acutely conscious of his dignity, his bearing partakes of the solemnity of Malvolio. He wonders whether he ought to remain on terms of such

196

easy familiarity with certain rowdy elements in the house. A prefect should not have too many friends. He should be the calm, implacable judge, impersonal, impartial, with bandaged eyes. He is very haughty for a day or two. But within a fortnight he has recovered. He becomes sociable once more. He walks down to the field with his old friends. He does not wonder whether it is wise or unwise to exchange confidences with those whose conduct one day he may be forced to view with official disapproval. He takes notice of, and deals with, only those problems that crop up from time to time. He acquires a wholesome tolerance of other people's business, a tolerance that slips over the border of indifference, but remains an admirable social lubricant.

It is this indifference, this refusal to be upset about trivial matters that can be left to adjust themselves, that is the secret of the success of British administration. Other nations and classes do not seem to possess it. The artisan when put in a position of authority bothers about the unimportant, he gives himself no peace, and he gives those under him no peace. There is constant friction. Troops almost invariably prefer to be under the command of public school men rather than of 'rankers.'

CHAPTER X

THE LAST TERM

THE last year, and especially the last term, is popularly supposed to be the happiest of a public school career. And it is possible that this may be so in the case of an industrious, worthy, but not particularly brilliant fellow who reaches in his last year the privileges of house prefectship, the immunities of the Lower Sixth and the social hall-mark of a second fifteen cap. At last, after a struggle of five years, he has extricated himself from the rut.

For the 'blood,' however, for the double first who has stayed on an extra year to be captain of the Eleven, these last terms are a disappointment. He has reached the limits of ambition. For a while he is attracted by the charm of his new offices, but he can discern beyond them no fresh fields to conquer. He is embarrassed by the finality of his position. He cannot value what he possesses. He wonders what is coming next. He scores tries in school matches, he makes centuries on the upper, but he had already done that before. 'The doing savours of disrelish.' He is expected to score tries and make centuries. The cheer that greets him as he grounds the ball between the posts has not the surprised enthusiasm that rippled down the touchline two years

198

ago when he amazed every one by giving two consecutive dummies and beating the whole defence. He is expected to do well, and when he is a little below his form, there is a feeling that he has lost the school the match.

Interest is focussed on the performance of the new men. A century by Shepherd causes more excitement than a century by Hobbs. Hobbs is established. The world has formed its estimate of his qualities. There is little new to be said about him. He belongs to the present and the past. Shepherd belongs to the future. He is a subject of speculation.

And so the double first at the end of the match hears far less talk of his own performances than he did a year earlier. He is taken for granted. It is all: 'What a beautiful drop that was of Smith's, he'll be a fine player in two years' time.' He would not analyse his discontent. But it is there the whole time. There is no longer a life of marked stages in front of him. He can peer now over the wall of school. He is worried, too, by the increasingly acute demands of his physical nature, by the restraints that are imposed on it. Very often a quite popular boy makes himself generally disliked during his last year on account of this irritation that expresses itself in bad temper, jealousy, and outbursts of unreasoning vindictiveness.

The last term is especially difficult. A boy finds himself freed from the conditions that had for the five previous years directed his conduct. He had always thought of 'next term.' Now

Public School Life

he realises suddenly that there is going to be no next term. He is no longer leading the normal life of his companions. On all sides of him preparations are being made for the future. Jones has decided to share the games study with Evans instead of Smith. Plans are being made for the arrangement of the dormitories. Ambitions are carefully tended, careers are nursed. So and so is worried because some one else has got his firsts before him. Dunston is distressed because he has been caught cribbing: 'There goes my chance of house prefectship.' And the boy who is about to leave slowly realises that these considerations have no longer any meaning for him.

If he is caught cribbing he is concerned only with his immediate punishment. If some one gets his colours before him it does not matter. He has done with the troubles of seniority. The old life is falling from him. He is perplexed, not seeing clearly what lies in front of him. Six years seemed such a long time. He had not paused to wonder what lay beyond them. He had come to regard that last Sunday in the school chapel as a final stage. School stories always ended there: in the same way that romances always closed on marriage, or on death. And, though now he would be no doubt ready to admit that a man's life did not end at the altar, and might even be prepared to consider the possibility of an existence beyond the grave, he had not considered such speculation profitable or entertaining.

And, in the same way that at a later point of his career he will awake with a start six months after marriage and ask himself whether it is all over: 'Heavens!' he will say, 'I can't be finished with; what's going to happen now?' So, during his last term, he discovers that this stage has not the finality he had supposed. Something has got to happen next. School life was, after all, no more than a prelude. He had valued too highly the enticing emoluments it had to offer. And he does not see what new prizes life will hold for him.

If he is going to Oxford he may toy with the prospect of athletic honours. But unless he is particularly gifted, or particularly conceited, he will appreciate the vast degree of specialised rivalry to which he will be subjected. If he is going into business he will envisage, perhaps, the days of affluence and power, of private secretaries and private telephones; but all that is a very long way off. There is no immediate focus for his ambition. There is no particular reason why he should not, if he wishes, make as big a nuisance of himself as his fancy pleases. He is passing from one phase of discipline to another; and because the nature of neither is definite, he considers himself free. A last term is often indeterminate and ineffectual.

Now if the discovery that school life is only a prelude is made by an unimaginative athlete during these last weeks, we can confidently assume that it will be made a good deal sooner

Public School Life

by a boy of originality and independence, especially by one who has not entered with any great zest into the conflict of athletic distinction, and has, therefore, been in a sense above the battle. He realises a good year and a half before he has to leave that life in its fullest is to be encountered beyond the limits of a cloistered world. The discovery does not contribute to his content. He knows that if he wishes to win a scholarship he will have to stay on his full time, and he feels that he is marking time, that he is sitting in the stalls of a theatre waiting for the curtain to go up. Now that is a most unsatisfactory position to be in. In the theatre we kick our heels, read our programmes, turn round to see if we can recognise a friend, speculate on the possibility of innocence in the lady who is sitting in the front row of the dress circle. One does anything to make the quarter of an hour pass quickly. The imaginative schoolboy behaves in a similar fashion. He frets and grows impatient. He assumes an intellectual snobbery. He despises the majority of his companions and labels them as Philistines. He disparages the values of athletics and exalts in essays and in the debating society the literary standards of the nineties.

It is possible that on Saturday evening he will leave a carnation standing in green ink in the hope of emulating his divinities. He is encouraged in his rebellion by the indignant astonishment of the master, who refuses to regard his outburst as a very natural and, on the whole,

harmless pose. He is lectured severely on the dignity of his position. He replies in a cryptic epigram. He even criticises the public school system—an unforgivable offence. Being unacquainted with the ways of systems, and feeling that his personal liberty is curtailed, he considers that for this curtailment the public school system is solely and peculiarly responsible. He will not allow that all systems oppress the individual, that systems are made for the service of the many, and that it is for the individualist to decide whether the privileges he will receive by consenting to remain with the mass compensate for the unpleasant restrictions that are placed on the free play of his personality. It is, after all, the first system with which he has contracted an intimate relationship, and in the same way that a monogamist considers his wife worse than anybody else's, the schoolboy delights, in spite of a deep affection for his own school, in hurling at the public school system all manner of accusations, in which the word sausage machine is not infrequently repeated.

There are such boys in every school. Age is an arbitrary definition of development. Many boys reach the age of seventeen, and stay there for the rest of their lives; others are twenty-five years old before they have done with their teens. When a boy is tired of school he has outgrown school. And there is only one sure remedy—to take him away.

But there are the claims of a university career; there is the parent's natural wish that his

Public School Life

son should gain a scholarship; it is often impracticable for the boy to leave: in such circumstances we can only recommend on the part of the masters a general leniency. Such outbursts should not be taken seriously. The school, as a whole, is not concerned with the unusual behaviour of those who, by the possession of brains, are already considered slightly abnormal. And the jester who is disregarded may well become a monk. If, however, a boy feels that notice is being taken of him, he allows his flattered vanity to dictate to him. He cultivates his pose; he wonders how best he may shock the mid-Victorianism of the common room, and there is the danger that the pose may, in the course of time, become part of his intellectual equipment.

Sermons and addresses inform us that in the last term is to be found the significance of school life. But, as I have previously tried to show, the last term is no more significant than the first. The new boy is outside school, pausing on the fringe, his eyes full of a sheltered curiosity. The boy who is about to leave is equally outside school; he looks backwards and he looks forwards; the continuity of his life is about to be broken; its rhythm is temporarily suspended. He is no longer leading the same life as his companions. And it is vain to compare the new boy with the boy that is about to leave, and by analysing and examining the change that there is between them to arrive at the meaning of school life.

They are two entirely different people. One

is a child; the other is a man. The change that must necessarily have taken place during this passage is so considerable that it is impossible to say how much of it is due to environment and how much to physical growth. You might send a man of thirty to Timbuctoo, recall him at the end of four years, and, examining the change in him apprehend the significance of Timbuctoo society. He went a man and he returned a man. What change there was in him could be attributed directly to the wholesome, or unwholesome, atmosphere of Timbuctoo.

You cannot follow this line of reasoning with a public school boy. A parent cannot say: 'Six years ago I sent you a young, innocent boy, industrious, honest, truthful. You have returned to me a young man who knows more than I consider it proper that he should know, whose sole object appears to be to extract from life as much pleasure as is commensurate with a minimum of work, a young man, moreover, who considers that a lie told to an official is not a lie. Look what you have done!' But that is not a fair attitude. Anyhow, during those six years, a boy must to a certain extent have lost his innocence; most young men of nineteen place the claims of personal indulgence before those of work. Most young men look on life as a game that is played between themselves and a perfectly ridiculous antiquated body which is called 'government,' and whom it is permissible to hoodwink, misinform, or otherwise deceive whenever the opportunity is presented.

Public School Life

The corroding forces of knowledge must make themselves felt during those six years. It is unreasonable and absurd to attribute their effects solely to the public school system.

One can, however, by examining the mental state of a boy a week after he has left school, form some estimate of what he has learnt at such considerable expense to his parents.

In the first place, he has acquired an extremely valuable social technique. A public school education is a passport. Its assailants would describe it as the membership of a select trades union. An old public school boy can enter a new mess without feeling any great embarrassment. He knows how to comport himself in the more superficial of the situations in which he will from time to time discover himself. All of which is distinctly valuable.

He has also learnt to understand the type of man with whom he will have most dealing. He is admitted, that is to say, to terms of good fellowship with a very large number of persons. He will be treated by them as a decent chap till he proves himself otherwise. He will have enough in common with them to be able to bridge superficially the uncertain moments that precede friendship. If he were introduced to a man at his club, he would have no difficulty in finding a congenial topic of conversation, during which conversation he would be able to decide whether or not the man to whom he had been introduced was likely to prove a sympathetic companion.

He would have learnt, through the exercise of

these qualities in a communal life, patience and tolerance of a certain kind. A tolerance, that is to say, that might condemn a man on the cut of his coat, the colour of his ties, or the use of an incorrect idiom, but would allow each man to lead his own private life provided he wore the conventional uniform. Such a tolerance may be described as snobbish and narrow, but is an admirable social lubricant. An old public school boy would be unlikely, for instance, to cause trouble to a mess or company or cricket club by injudicious interference. He will have learnt that it is not easy for an assorted collection of men to live together without occasionally getting on each other's nerves, and he will have learnt, in consequence, the value of tact and compromise.

He will also have learnt a version of his duty towards his neighbours. He would not tell a lie to a friend unless it was absolutely necessary, and he would never let a friend down. He has the sense of loyalty developed to a high degree. All of which goes down on the credit side of the ledger. On the debit side, however, there are enough entries to make the cashier wonder whether, or no, the account is overdrawn.

It is amazing how little knowledge the average public school boy has managed to acquire. He has rushed from one class room to another, learning French for one hour, and history for another, and science for a third. He has worked at each of these subjects spasmodically according to the particular form and set in which he has happened at the time to find himself. For a

Public School Life

whole year on end he may have neglected French because he was under a lazy master. Then, at the end of the year, on finding himself in a higher and more strenuous form, he may have made feverish efforts for a couple of terms, to the detriment of his mathematics and history, with the result that there is an enormous gap in his knowledge. Whole periods of history are a blank to him. He has acquired a certain quantity of uncorrelated information. Within a few years what little connection there was between the appreciation of these isolated facts will have slipped away. There will remain a few phrases, a few catchwords, a few dates—an admirable framework indeed for social, moral, and political prejudice.

The average public school boy knows, I imagine, a great deal less than the continental school product. Not only has he learnt little, but he has not been encouraged to use his brains. He does not, indeed, regard his brain as a possession to be valued highly and carefully trained. He will get out of bed five minutes earlier than he need do in the morning to wave his legs about his head and do exercises with his arms that will improve his physical condition, but he would never think of learning a dozen lines of English verse to improve his memory. No one ever appears to have impressed on him the fact that at thirty-five he will have to abandon football; that, by the time he is fifty, he will be bowling very slow stuff indeed, and will be grateful to the opposing captain who offers him

a runner. Yet, at sixty, his brain will, if properly cared for, be as powerful as it has ever been.

Now I do not want to suggest that boys should devote their whole spare time to the reading of poetry; literature is only a part of life; but I do maintain that every public school boy should take some part in the intellectual life of the world, that he should be able to discover as much interest in his mind as in his body. At present he does not. He has very little inner life. He depends far too much on outside interests, on games during the term, and theatres during the holidays. If he has to rely on his own devices, he is woefully deficient.

This fact was brought home to me vividly by my experience as a prisoner of war in Germany. The average officer had no resources of his own; he could draw no sustenance from the contemplative side of life. He mooned round the square, wondering how soon he could decently set about his next meal, longing sadly for the lights of Piccadilly. In the evenings, when he had to return to his room, he spent the three or four hours before lights were extinguished engraving rather aimless pictures on the lids of cigar boxes. It was a pathetic sight to see a man of twenty-eight, in the prime of life, sitting down night after night to fiddle about with a knife, a piece of wood, and a box of paints. He derived no pleasure from it. It was a narcotic. As long as his hands were employed his brain could go to sleep, and he needed to contemplate no longer the tedious procession of days that lay before

Public School Life

him. Every man should have sufficient part in the intellectual interests of life to be able to keep his intelligence active for eight months in surroundings that provide no physical outlets.

The public school boy has derived little satisfaction from his work. He has laboured spasmodically with expediency as the goal. Promotion has promised certain attendant privileges, and the historical Sixth lies, calm and pleasant, like a lake in the desert.

There is to be found a rest 'for all who come.' It is a sure port after the shipwrecks of the fourths and fifths. The traveller need work no more; he has laboured faithfully, let him enter into the joy of his lord. He returns one holiday having gained his second eleven colours. Paternal pride is flattered, and the spirit of welcome is only partially relaxed by the accompanying report. About a week later the following conversation takes place over a glass of port.

Son : I say, father, don't you think all these classics are rather a waste of time ?

Father : Well, I don't know, my boy. I did them myself, you know.

Son : Of course, father, of course; but things were a bit different then, and besides you were so much better at them than I am.

Father : Oh, well, if you put it like that, my boy, well, perhaps——

Son : You see, father, I thought it would be rather a good idea for me to read history.

Father : History, my boy, whatever for ?

Son : Well, I was thinking of taking up politics, father, and anyway, history scholarships are awfully easy to get. That ass, Kenneth, got one—you know, the fellow in the School House with the yellow hair. If you'd just drop a line to Chief, father, I'm sure he would be only too glad . . .

One more pilgrim has arrived at Mecca. The higher up the school one goes, the less work one does. After a few terms the habit of work is lost, and the only real diligence is displayed by that melancholy type of scholar who is trained like a pet Pomeranian.

This is not an ideal apprenticeship for life. It starts a boy with an entirely false idea of the position that his work should occupy in his life. I do not wish to seem parsonic, but, if the experience of practically every big man that has ever lived means anything to us, we do know that a man's happiness, or unhappiness, depends in the main on whether his employment is congenial to him. Work is the finest antidote to boredom. And a public school boy has not realised this by the time he is on the threshold of his career. He does not consider that the choice of his career should be the expression of his temperament. He drifts into the most accessibly remunerative job. He brings to it no enthusiasm.

The trouble is that school life lasts too long and is far too jolly. Six years is a long time. A boy of thirteen can hardly be expected to realise

Public School Life

that it is only a prelude. The years pass so happily, the pursuit of ambition is so engrossing that he has no time to consider whether the prizes he is winning have any lasting value. As the new boy he longs to be captain of the school: and, having set himself a task, he does not shrink from the contest. School life is so vast, so varied, so many-coloured that it would be difficult for a boy to relinquish his hold upon the ambition that lies close to him in favour of the shadowy ambitions of the life that lies beyond it. School life is too big a pedestal for the statue that is to be placed on it. It dwarfs what it should present. The boy finds on leaving school that an entirely different technique is required. It is not that the standards are changed, but the whole manner of life is altered.

His school career was divided neatly into stages. He could at any moment consult a house list and see how he was progressing on the road to authority. At such a period he should have reached the Fifth table. If he were one day to get into the Fifteen, he should by his sixteenth birthday have got his house cap. Everything was mapped out. The rungs of the ladder were labelled. Colt's Cap, House Cap, Seconds, Firsts, Fourth Form, Fifth Form, Sixth.

In business he finds no such ladder. His abilities are placed upon the open market. He is fighting an intangible foe. He has to come to terms with himself. He feels that he is driving into the void. He also finds that he

has to rearrange his scale of values. Athletic distinction is not greatly prized in Wall Street, and the young man who, when asked to present his qualifications, remarks that his batting average was over thirty, without a single not-out score to help it, is likely to receive a rude shock. I spent a few months before I went to Sandhurst in the Inns of Court O.T.C. (a corps that had, by that time, ceased to be composed of ex-public school men), and it was a blow to discover that the fact that I had been in my school eleven and fifteen made not the slightest impression on any of the N.C.O.'s.

It may be that a readjustment of one's standards is a healthy experience. But that is hardly the attitude that officials could safely adopt. The public school system is supposed to produce trained citizens, who are in harmony with their environment. And that is exactly what the public school boy is not. He tries to tackle life with the scale of values that he learnt to apprehend at school. And it is not an easy task. Some, indeed, never accomplish it. They never readjust themselves. They surround themselves with old friends, revisit their old schools, endeavour to recapture the old atmosphere. They regret vaguely that something has passed. Like Jurgen, they return in quest of their youth, but the distorted shadow of Sereda prevents them from entering completely their former selves. In *The Harrovians* Arnold Lunn makes two of his characters discuss this question.

Public School Life

‘There’s West, for example,’ Peter said, ‘he’ll never be such a blood again. He hasn’t any brains. He couldn’t even struggle into the Upper School, but he’s a mighty man here. Rather a pity, I think, that life should reach its highest point at nineteen. This ought only to be a beginning.’

That states the case.

CHAPTER XI

THE OLD BOY AS SCHOOLMASTER AND PARENT

FEARS for the future and regrets for the past are alike forgotten during the last week. There are sad moments, but, as Arnold Lunn remarked, 'there is a world of difference between the pleasant sorrow of sentiment and the more real depression that coincides with an overdraft at the bank.' The last week is passed in a mood that I once heard described as 'happy-sad.' On the last Sunday in chapel the boy who is leaving endeavours to summon the appropriate emotion. He knows how he ought to feel. He has been instructed by so many stories. He is, in a way, an actor in a drama. He knows that the fag on the other side of the aisle is looking at him, is saying to himself: 'This is Jones's last chapel. What is he feeling?' And, like an actor, Jones does not want to disappoint his audience. He feels as he should feel. There is a lump at the back of his throat. But, on the whole, leaving is an exciting experience.

There is the auction of study furniture, when pictures that cost five shillings when they were new, fetch seven and six in their fourth year of service. There are the calls to be paid to masters, the 'good-byes' and 'good lucks.'

Public School Life

It is the abdication of office when one is at the height of one's authority. It is a fine gesture that 'immeasurable power, unsated to resign,' to be able to step straight out from the lighted room, before the corroding forces of change have begun to work, and before habit has dulled applause. The exit is made at exactly the right moment. The curtain falls on a dramatic climax. And how rarely that happens.

In a temper of wistful sentimentality and self-satisfaction, arrayed in the colours of the old boys' society, the ex-public school boy leans out of the carriage window, waves good-bye to the friends who are catching a later train, makes and extracts promises to write, and watches as the train moves out of the station the familiar landmarks slip one by one behind him.

A sentimental, that is to say, a superficial emotion passes quickly. And it depends on the kind of life which awaits a boy, whether or not this sentimental regret will be followed by an acute sense of loss.

If he is going up to the university or to some remunerative and interesting employment, it is probable that he will forget school altogether in the fascination of a new life. If, however, he is destined for some dull unromantic post in the city, the thought of school will for a long time wake in him a deep, hopeless nostalgia. He will bring no enthusiasm to his work, and, as he sits at his high desk, balancing ledgers, computing insurance policies, adjusting income-tax returns, he will compare the monotony of his routine

216

The Old Boy as Schoolmaster and Parent

with the coloured movement and variety of school. As he walks to his office he will remind himself that at this moment the morning chapel is just ending. The school will be pouring across the courts. If he were there he would be walking arm in-arm with some friend of his to the classroom, stopping on the way some intelligent friend to demand the elucidation of certain tiresome theorems. As he returns to the office after lunch he will say to himself: 'If I were there now I should be changing for football. I should have before me the prospect of a hard game and a bath afterwards, and a long, lazy evening in front of the games study fire.' And, at the end of the day, on his return to his home or diggings, he is lonely with the recollection of how often at such a time he has sat in the class-room waiting impatiently for the clock to strike, waiting for the moment of freedom when he can gather his books under his arm and rush back to the house to tea, to the four delightful hours of friendship and discussion that lie in that enchanted period between lock-up and lights out. School life never means so much to a boy as it does during his few months after he has left it. For he sees it transfigured in his imagination; he remembers nothing of the tiresome demands of routine, nothing of the friction between boys and masters, nothing of the long boring hours in form when he watched the patch of sunlight drift across the wall, nothing of the anxieties, the annoyances, the restrictions of a cloistered life. He sees it

Public School Life

purged of the accidental, a city of his own fashioning.

It does not last, of course, this intense nostalgia. No young man can live for very long in the past. New interests come to him, he finds new fields for his ambition. He makes friends in his office. He joins a tennis club, he takes dancing lessons. He sets out in search of life. He ceases, at every vacant moment of the day, to compute what he would be doing were he at school instead of at an office. He thinks of the innings he intends to play next Saturday: his eyes pick out on the carpet an imaginary spot ten feet away from him, and he considers what shot he would play to a ball that pitched on it; he also perhaps wonders what exactly that charming lady with whom he had danced the night before, had meant when she had said, with a peculiar inflection in her voice: 'You're growing up.'

His correspondence with his old friends becomes spasmodic. He no longer writes to his house master once a month. The arrival of a letter with the school crest on it ceases to excite him as it did. The school magazine becomes full of names that are meaningless to him. He notes with disgust that Baxter, in his day a miserable little squirt, has got into the Eleven; and that that goggle-eyed ass, Barton, is head of the school. He asks himself at Christmas whether it is worth his while to renew his subscription, and decides that it is not. From time to time he reads in *The Sportsman* of the feats of his school Fifteen, and remarks

218

The Old Boy as Schoolmaster and Parent

without enthusiasm that 'Fernhurst must be pretty strong this year.' His school life has dropped from him as a coat that he has outgrown. It belongs to the past, and he is living in the future. School will not mean much to him for another twenty years, till the time comes, that is to say, when he will have to send his son to school.

Then will he recover his youth, and live again his school days in his son, only more intensely, because he will be living them in his imagination. In the achievements of his son he will recognise the ghost of his old ambitions. His son's career will be more personal to him than his own. He will take more pleasure in his son's successes than the boy will himself. Indeed a great deal of a boy's pleasure in his success lies in his appreciation of the happiness that it will bring to his father. At no time in their lives do father and son come so close to one another as during these years. And it is at first sight surprising that this intimacy should not produce that common ground on which difficulties may be openly discussed and quarrels healed. For in spite of this intimacy, the relations between father and son are very often superficial.

This statement may appear self-contradictory, but a little examination will show that this is not so. We do not necessarily confide in the people we love best. Let any man think of his friends and acquaintances, and he may be surprised to discover that he knows a great deal more about his acquaintances than his friends.

Public School Life

I do not lay it down as a fact that he will make this discovery. I merely say that he may make it; certainly a great many will.

At school, where one has a vast number of acquaintances and a few friends, I used to wonder sometimes how best one could draw the dividing line between a friend and an acquaintance. And I decided that the difference lay in silence, that with a friend one could be silent, whereas with an acquaintance one could not. If a friend walked into one's study when one was busy, one smiled and went on with one's work; the friend picked up a book and read. But if an acquaintance came in, one immediately stopped what one was doing; one felt that silence would become embarrassing.

In the same way one does not, in the company of a real friend, feel the need of personal confidences. One likes being with him. That is enough. One sits over a fire and talks spasmodically, with long silences drifting into the conversation. But with a person of whom one is not particularly fond, such desultory conversation is not adequate. An acquaintance is not, in himself, sufficiently interesting—he is interesting in what he has done, or is doing. The need for confidences is essential. And so it is that most of us have acquaintances to whom we recount all our discreditable exploits, our romances, our financial enterprises, with whom we seem, in fact, remarkably intimate, but whose absence, were they to pass out of our lives, we should not greatly regret. The man who knows

The Old Boy as Schoolmaster and Parent

most about us very often matters least to us. This is not a generalisation. One cannot generalise about an abstraction like friendship, that has a different meaning and a different message for every individual man. But such relationships are a common experience; they are the more common in the degree that their subjects are the more reserved. And there is no more reserved class than that of past and present public school boys.

This is, at any rate, the only explanation that I can find for the superficial relations between son and father that are spread over so deep a trust and intimacy. They accept without appreciating this superficiality. The father comes down at half term, and he goes for a walk arm in arm with his son, along the slopes. They discuss home affairs and the external activities of school: football shop, cricket shop, house politics. They rarely touch on the boy's inner life; the father can only guess at what his boy is doing and thinking. Underneath their love for each other they are strangers.

On the important issues of school life they are both driven to accept the verdict of the house master or head master. And he, although he is working in the dark on both sides of him, is their only intermediary.

But the relationships between parents and children are too intricate for so short a book as this. Indeed, I doubt whether it is possible ever to tackle satisfactorily a subject, the nature of which alters with every individual case. One

Public School Life

would be lost at once in a labyrinth of generalisations and exceptions; Lytton Strachey made no attempt to write a history of the Victorian era. He selected and analysed a few specimens; that is, I believe, the only way in which to deal with the complex subject of parenthood. And it can only be thus dealt with by the story-teller, by the man who says: 'I care nothing for general principles. But this is how things went for one family.' In a general study such as this, it is quite impossible to dogmatise from individual cases. But I would submit this facet of the relationship between father and son as an important one in the study of school society. It throws the need for co-operation almost entirely on the schoolmaster. It makes his responsibility greater than he knows.

Now there are three types of men to whom the scholastic profession makes its chief appeal. There is the brilliant scholar, the man with the double first, who will turn out to be either completely incompetent, or will become a head master. There is the athlete who takes a third, or at best a second in mods, and on the strength of a blue, returns as games master to his old school. Lastly, there is the idealist, the man who regards teaching as a calling and not a trade, the man who may be either an impossible crank or, in his own line, a genius.

The first class of master plays, on the whole, a small part in the politics of school life. If he is incompetent he is ragged in form and his opinion carries no weight in the common room.

The Old Boy as Schoolmaster and Parent

If he is successful, he is a bird of passage, on his way to some rich head-mastership. He may become a house master for a while, but he is always looking beyond his immediate surroundings. He is ambitious. He does not regard one school as his compass. Always he is just outside the drama.

The second class, however, forms the backbone of tradition. The old boy comes back to his old school with an intense loyalty and with the intention of staying there for the rest of his life. His ambition is to have the best house in the best school in the best county. He is usually a very fine fellow indeed, but he represents eternally the spirit of reaction. He lives in the standards of his youth. He has had no opportunity of testing those standards in another environment. His whole life has moved within the circle of one school.

He imbibed as a boy the public school spirit, and he did not outgrow that spirit at the university—hardly a proof of mental elasticity. He has no sense of progress or of change in the world for which he is training the young. As things have been, so shall they be. The old boy turned house master is the most powerful force in the common room. He is the chief obstacle that the enthusiast has to face.

With regard to the enthusiast, one is tempted to put an asterisk against the heading and a footnote, '*Vide* the novels of S. P. B. Mais *passim*,' and leave it at that. For Mr. Mais knows more about the reception of this type of

Public School Life

master than any other man in the kingdom. He has himself a genius for teaching. I cannot imagine a better English master. He inspires enthusiasm in the confirmed slacker. He is an invaluable asset to any staff, and yet nearly everywhere he has been met by opposition. His own story, as set forth in *A Schoolmaster's Diary*, is typical of the young movement. Only there is this difference, that, whereas Mr. Mais has never yielded to the reactionary influences, the majority of young masters conform to the custom of the country. Their position is extremely difficult.

They leave Oxford with high ambitions. They have dissected and analysed the system, they have discovered the vital spot; they are eager to put their reforms into action. They have wonderful schemes for inspiring boys with a love of the beautiful, with an interest in politics and life. They are prepared to be ruthless in their battle; they will neither ask nor give quarter. They will not be fettered to the reactionary indolence of the intolerant and the effete. They have a mission and a purpose. They bring a sword. They arrive at school with a quenchless ardour.

Like the small boy home for the holidays, they want to do everything on the first day. Before they have had time to look round they are suggesting schemes for founding literary and dramatic circles: they want to open a political debating society where there shall be files of *The Nation* and *The Daily News*. They start a

The Old Boy as Schoolmaster and Parent

mile race at the speed of a hundred yards and find themselves alone in the void. Every one else is going at a very leisurely pace. There is no need for hurry. Their whole life is before them. The school has been in existence a very long while. It is moving in its own time to its duly appointed ends. The young enthusiast grows impatient: like most intense people he is tactless and makes mistakes. He ignores his colleagues, or interferes with their arrangements. He creates an atmosphere of opposition. This is, of course, what he has anticipated. The fight, he feels, is going to begin. But the nature of the fight is very different from what he had expected.

It is not waged with the intolerant and the effete, but with men whom he cannot help admiring. He cannot make himself hate his enemies. The old boy house master, it cannot be too often repeated, is a very fine fellow. And his point of view is reasonable. He has given his youth, his energy, his ambition to his school. He has cared for nothing else. He has allowed many of the good things of life to pass him because of this unwavering devotion, and it is natural that he should resent the intrusion of a young fellow who has not had time to learn to love the school, but who wants to overturn the most cherished privileges.

And his methods are so impeccably direct and honest. He does not go behind the young man's back to the head master. He has the young man into his study for a chat; he looks

Public School Life

him straight in the face. He says: 'Come now, we've got to have this out.' And the young man finds it so desperately hard not to admire him. He endeavours to open a discussion: he states his case. For a moment he seems to forget the personal issue in the case. Confidence comes back to him. He develops his argument, and then, just when he feels that his grip is closing on the contest, he is beaten by that disarming sentimentality which is the most powerful of all the old boy's weapons.

'My dear fellow,' he will say, 'you have your point of view and I have mine. We are both in our own ways working for the good of the school; why must we quarrel? We are fighting the same fight. But we can do nothing unless we stand together. I've given my whole life to the cause; you are just beginning.'

The acceptance of this offer of friendship and co-operation means defeat. The young man knows it. But it is so hard to refuse. The rebel in any sphere of life has no harder task than the cutting adrift from his own caste and the subsequent alliance with men of different upbringing and different standards. He sees, on the one hand, a vast number of noble, if bigoted men, men whom he can trust and admire. And, on the other side, as a setting for the few idealists in whose principles he believes, the arrayed forces of envy, greed, and malice. The temptation to cling to what he knows and what secretly

The Old Boy as Schoolmaster and Parent

he admires is too great. Most of the young enthusiasts give way soon. They join the forces of reaction.

And those that stand out are inevitably broken. What chance have they after all? The modern intellectual is something of a negativist. His tolerance is composed of indifference and uncertainty. He sees life in the words of Jurgen as a 'wasteful and inequitable process,' and does not discern clearly how to alter it. His philosophy is a series of disappointments. He is bound to go down before a bigotry that is certain of itself. The forces of reaction are so powerfully entrenched. The old boy house master knows exactly what he wants and how he proposes to get it. He advances down a straight road. His enemies pause and wonder and question themselves.

The bigot usually makes the best administrator. He is not worried by abstractions. He is certain of his ends and can devote all his attention to the means. The tolerant head master, the man who sees both points of view, is overcome in the end by preponderating faith and sincerity of reaction. The new man is invariably subjugated, or else is made to go. No head master would be anxious to take his side.

The games master type is intensely popular with parents and old boys. He represents for them the public school spirit. He is a fixed, immutable principle in which they can place their trust. They would be intensely worried were

Public School Life

they to learn that the head master had taken the side of a new man against their old friend. The subject would be discussed in the clubs: 'There's trouble brewing at Fernhurst,' they would say. 'This new head master is a liberal. He's quarrelling with old Aiken. I don't like the look of it.' And the position of the school would be shaken. Parents would send their sons elsewhere. The numbers would drop. Unpleasant questions would be put to the head master at the next meeting of the governors. It is the old trouble of the merchant and his goods. Parents have to be placated. They have been assured that 'all is for the best in the best of all possible schools'; and, when they hear rumours of dissension they naturally imagine that something must be wrong with that particular school. It is not so everywhere. They remind the head master of his own official utterances. And it is not easy after prophesying smooth things to satisfy the complaints of those who find them hard.

A head master has to reach his ends through infinite tact and patience and through a long series of compromises. He has to be something of an opportunist. He has to give reasons other than the true ones for what he does. He has to promote progress secretly, while he advocates conservatism. And it is hard to remain true to oneself while playing the Jekyll and Hyde game. Motives become involved; there is too much diplomacy, and the forces of reaction, whatever else they be, are distinctly honest.

The Old Boy as Schoolmaster and Parent

Certainly he cannot allow the clumsy enthusiasm of a young man to complicate his vexed existence. And the young man has either to break or bend. Usually he bends. He has, after all, to consider his own career. He compromises with himself. He manages to persuade himself that he is not really yielding, but that he is adopting different tactics, attacking the enemy from another side. He decides to do his work of reform quietly, without ostentation. Other people can do their own way if they like.

That compromise is the start of a long process of self-deception. When he becomes a house master it will be so simple to put off parents with excuses. He will be able to justify himself, to say: 'These are stupid folk. They will worry me if I encourage them. I have my work to do. I must pacify them and get on with it.' And so the circle completes itself. The young man who sets out to reform school life, who brought to the task a fine, untried energy, ends in evasion, compromise and self-deception. Boys, parents, and masters are working at cross purposes.

There are certainly a large number of entries on the debit side of the ledger. It remains to be decided what hand has written these entries and whether it is possible to erase them. To a large extent they are due to four things: the moral issue; the cult of athleticism, which is regarded as an antidote to immorality; the conspiracy of silence that exists between parents and boys and masters, and the long period a

Public School Life

boy spends at school—the six years that separate so unduly the junior from the senior, that accentuate the blood system, that erect a wall shutting out the world at large. School life is too much of a walled garden, too much of a world in itself. It has remained monastic, it has not established contact with the movements of the hour.

CHAPTER XII

SOME SUGGESTIONS: THE LEAVING AGE WITH REGARD TO MORALS

THE ardent idealists with their thousand pretty schemes for the regeneration of mankind, find no difficulty in allotting a few panaceas to the Public School. We hear of the 'new world' and of the 'new spirit,' and there is glib talk about the phoenix and the ashes. A few laws have to be passed, a few peasants educated and there will be an end of competition. 'The strong will support the weak, the clever work unselfishly for the general good. Wealth and intellect will be placed at the service of the state. The relations of the sexes will be ordered by eugenics.'

It is all very jolly, and unless to-day one subscribes unfalteringly to this belief in a new world, one is called a reactionary and a materialist. The millennium, we are told, is round the corner. The finest intellects of thirty centuries may have failed to find it, but the farm labourer has only to spend a few half-hours with an English grammar to discover it at his feet. It must be very nice to believe all that, to be able to comfort oneself in dark moments with the assurance that for one's children's children life will be a happy hunting ground. It must be a drug more potent

Public School Life

than laudanum, more sweet than hashish. But it is of small avail in the dust and traffic of humanity. In the case of the Public Schools we shall do well to examine what is at hand and prescribe what cures we may, without the indulgence of distant speculation.

The four main objects of criticism, then, are the moral question, the evil of athleticism, the false scale of values that is inculcated at a Public School, and the subsequent conspiracy of silence. On the moral question the advanced idealists have talked more and to less purpose than on any other phase of school life. They have written of the discovery of the soul, of the unfolding of the flower. They have maintained that through art and literature the boy's emotional nature will be directed to a higher, a nobler conception of life. The psycho-analyst speaks of 'sublimation,' and they have fastened on to this cliché. Was not this what they had been saying so long, in other words—the sublimation of the sexual impulse?

Now, in the case of a celibate priest or a maiden lady it is, no doubt, highly desirable and perhaps possible to sublimate an impulse which has been and in all probability will be, denied natural satisfaction. But it is a pretty hopeless job to sublimate an impulse that has every hope and prospect of complete, direct, and natural realization; and that is the task that the advocates of flowers and poetry and the dawn have set themselves. If we are to change the moral tone of a Public School we shall have to find either

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

an alternative system, or we shall have to modify in some way the existing system.

Two alternatives are offered: co-education and the day school. In neither case should immorality be general or serious, and the number of romantic friendships correspondingly slight. It seems hardly possible that a normal healthy boy would be attracted by a smaller boy when, at a school like Bedales, he would be constantly in the company of young and charming scholars. And though the day boarder lives for the greater part of his day in a monastic society, he spends the majority of his spare time outside it. And during the week-ends he has full opportunity to continue any romance on which he may have embarked during the previous holidays. Although it is only possible for me to speak here from second-hand information, it can be assumed, I think, that at the co-educational and day school the moral question must sink to comparative unimportance. It has to be considered, however, whether this relegation compensates for the consequent disadvantages.

Co-education is, of course, a new game, and it is difficult to write of it with confidence. At a lecture that I gave about three years ago, a young woman rose from the back of the hall and asked 'what Mr. Waugh thought about co-education?' I had, as a matter of fact, thought about it very little, but I felt that I could hardly confess as much. I said, therefore, something about 'co-education being excellent for delicate and sensitive boys who would find

Public School Life

Public Schools too rough for them.' The young woman then indignantly demanded what the girls had done to deserve the companionship of only delicate and sensitive boys. It was an unanswerable protest, but having since then thought the matter over more carefully, I believe that, if the same question were put to me to-day I should make the same reply. It may be that such a reply would be based only on prejudice and a preconceived idea. But, after all, the evil that one knows is better than the evil that one does not know. And who would wish away his school days.

If you were to ask a small boy of thirteen whether he would prefer to go to Uppingham or Bedales, he would promptly reply 'Uppingham.' If, two years later, you were to say to him: 'Would you rather have gone to Bedales than Uppingham?' he would reply: 'Lord, no.' If at the end of his last term, when it was all over, you were to ask him whether he regretted his choice, he would say: 'Good God, no!' And, twenty years afterwards, when the time had come for him to decide where he should send his son, were you to ask him yet again: 'Bedales or Uppingham?' he would reply without hesitation, 'Uppingham.'

Why, after all, should he depart from an old allegiance. He knows nothing of Bedales, nothing of the troubles and adversities that his son will have to face there. He will be unable to help him, he will be denied that greatest privilege of fatherhood, the unquestioning trust

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

of the son who knows that his father has trod every inch of the way before him. Father and son rarely come so close to one another as they do during those five years at a Public School. They are living practically the same life; the father finds his lost youth in the son. Is it likely that he will abandon such a certainty for a supposed and uncertain good. The public school system was formed round certain distinct traits in the British character. It is the expression of the national temperament. Nearly every one is happy at a Public School. It is the manner of life that we enjoy, that is in sympathy with our tastes and customs. The reformers may say what they will. You cannot turn a dog from the food it loves. This attitude to co-education may be illogical, it may be prejudiced, it may be reactionary—I do not know. One can only restate the fact that we are content to be old-fashioned people.

The case of the day school cannot be so summarily dismissed. At a first sight indeed it appears to possess all the advantages and none of the disadvantages of a Public School. A boy acquires *esprit de corps*, but is saved from wild partisanship. He strengthens the qualities of courage and independence as fully as he would at a Public School, and the home influence is maintained. His moral lapses, if any, are likely to be occasioned by the attractions of the other sex. My friend, Mr. Oscar Browning, has indeed often assured me that the day school is the only possible solution of the difficulty, and in a symposium on the

Public School Life

English Public Schools he wrote that 'House rivalries and the overwhelming importance of house matches cannot exist in day schools where boys live with their families, nor is school life likely to be so communal.' Many other educational authorities, whose testimony one must respect, have expressed their faith in day schools. Certainly the claim of the day school must be carefully examined. And it is with diffidence that I approach the task.

At most boarding schools the day boy is looked down upon. For some obscure reason the day boy always seems to be inferior to the boarder. He is rarely prominent in games or work. One ceases, indeed, to regard him as a member of the school. He comes into form, he writes his prose, he attends corp parade, he plays his games. But, at six o'clock, when the bell rings for tea and the intimate life of the day begins, he collects his books and hurries across the courts and passes into another life.

The period between lock-up and lights out is in retrospect the most charming part of the day. The troubles of the day are over. Lessons have to be prepared in prep., but they will not be heard till the next morning. Time enough to worry about that after breakfast. It is after tea that one packs twelve people into a study measuring eight feet by four and discusses the prospects of the house in the Two Cock, the 'latest case,' and Evans's chance of getting into the Fifteen. Prep. is but a pause in the discussions of these momentous trivialities. After prayers there is an

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

hour in which to brew coffee and renew the endlessly attractive conversation. These are the times of friendship and good feeling, and they are lost to the day boarder. Like the new boy, he is outside the life of the school. He moves in a different environment; he has different interests, he cannot enter into the eager loyalties and aversions of house politics. In a school such as Clifton, where there are a large number of day boys, the position is, of course, different. The day boy there occupies a definite social status. Instead of being attached to a house for games, he is grouped into that sector of the town in which he happens to live. His friends are leading much the same life as he is. But it can scarcely be denied that the day boarder loses a great deal of the charm of a communal life.

What does he gain to compensate for that loss?

He is protected to a large extent from the moral lapses peculiar to a Public School. He will develop through normal channels. Though, as he will in chapel and in his school listen to addresses that are based on the accepted official attitude, it is a little doubtful whether he will find himself in this respect much more satisfactorily educated than the boarder. At any rate he should be saved the disquieting experiences of a romantic friendship, and he will be less of a slave to the partisanship and house feeling. But does he gain anything else?

We hear a great deal about the value of home influence, but what does home mean for the

Public School Life

day boy? He rushes home at the end of the day, has his tea, and then settles down to prepare his lessons. By the time he has finished them it is time for him to go to bed. He has had little opportunity for talking either to his father or his mother. In the morning he has only time to rush his breakfast and hurry off to school. It must be remembered also that the parents who send their sons to day schools are usually not particularly well off. It is one thing to come home at the end of a hard day to the quiet seclusion of a warm and cosy study where everything will be quiet and undisturbed. It is another thing to come back to a house that is making strenuous efforts to get things straight before the master of the house returns. Middle-aged business men expect to find things made snug for them; they do not want schoolboys kicking about the place at the end of the day.

Nothing is more uncomfortable than breakfast in the average suburban family. There is the flutter over the post, the opening and shutting of the paper, the constant glances at the clock. There is a banging of doors, and running up of stairs, and the shouting over banisters. A sigh of relief is heard when the front door closes behind the wage-earner.

In a large, well-run house the domestic machinery moves so smoothly that it is unnoticed. In a small suburban villa these moments of arrival and departure provide constant friction, and it is from the small suburban villa that the majority of day boarders are recruited.

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

In consequence the day boy starts his day's work at a disadvantage. It is like playing a cricket match on an opponent's ground. One arrives a little jaded. The boarder is on the spot. He has twenty-five minutes' leisure between chapel and breakfast. It is possible, of course, that he will pass these twenty-five minutes in a feverish attempt to prepare the 'con' for which he had been allotted an hour on the time-table of the previous night. But that is his own fault. He has every chance of starting the day fresh.

I cannot think that the rush of getting off in the morning and the journey to school can be good for a boy of fifteen. It is a strain for a full-grown man. That twenty minutes' jolt in tubes and lifts is exhausting. No one arrives at the office perfectly fresh. By the time one gets back at night one is really tired. The tube journey at the end of a hard day completes one's weariness. And on top of that weariness the day boarder has to do an hour and a half's preparation. It is not the ideal setting for successful work.

The day boy is also leading two lives at the same time. He cannot shut them away in watertight compartments. They overlap. It is, no doubt, for the business man a great privilege and a great relief to be able to return at the end of the day to a quiet evening in his wife's company. But then he has not got to work at home, and work implies friction. The worker wants an absence of outside influences. He wants the

Public School Life

company of quiet folk who make no particular demands on his energy and patience, with whom his relations are superficial and for whom he does not particularly care.

Many writers make a failure of marriage because they put their study too near their nursery. The imaginative worker wants to be alone, not only while he is working, but for an hour before he starts working and for an hour after he has finished working. In many ways the army is the ideal career for a writer. He can do his two hours' writing after tea, have his bath and change, and go down to the ante-room, where he can read his paper quietly and chat superficially with people who make no demands on him. Wherever there is an intimate relationship there is friction. The proper adjustment of his work to his personal life is the most delicate task a man has to tackle. It is beyond the compass of a small boy. For the very reason that a boy loves his parents there will be friction; a strain will be placed, that is to say, upon his energy and patience. The boarder has fewer worries and, in consequence, is happier than the day boy.

The advocates of 'home influence' must also remember that the day boy takes his home for granted. We cannot appreciate the value of anything till we have either lost it, or become separated from it. Home means a great deal to the boarder. Holidays mark for him a complete change of life, to the day boy holidays mean little save the pleasurable cessation of certain irksome duties. He can stay in bed

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

longer in the morning, he has not got to hurry his breakfast, a free day lies in front of him. He will not have to waste his time over Latin Prose and Thucydides. During the term-time he has, except during week-ends, very few opportunities of intimate conversation with his parents, and because he has come to regard their presence as a natural environment he does not, during the holidays, make, as the boarder does, special efforts to see as much of them as possible. The influence of a place need be no more effective because one happens to live in it than the influence of a person because one happens to be in his, or her, company. It depends on the value set on the place or person. The boarder values his home more highly than the day boy. The influence of home is more likely to be felt by him than by the day boy. Letters from home are an event in the boarder's life. They mean more than a walk on Sunday morning, and the hours are counted to the half-term visit.

The day boy also comes far less into contact with masters than the boarder does. Indeed the head master of a school can only have a superficial knowledge of the boys that are entrusted to him. He sees them in the form room and on the cricket field. But he does not watch the development of the boy's character through his reactions towards and away from the intrigues, romances, and jealousies of house politics. There is no constant theme, only a few uncertain *motifs*. The head master has not sufficient material upon which to work. The discovery of so many clues

is denied to him. Every boy at some time or other must pause and wonder how much his head master really knows about him. It is a subject, for most of us, of disquieting conjecture. But the day boy can dismiss it with an easy conscience. School for him is a place in which he works and plays, but does not live. Indeed he is a child of no man's land, passing between two countries, a true citizen of neither.

There are those who say that parents are the only people who understand their children, and will maintain that it is criminal to take young boys away from their parents at an impressionable age and place them in charge of schoolmasters who can know nothing about them. But parents are, as a matter of fact, as likely to make mistakes as any one else.

We find in anything what we bring to it. And parents expecting their sons to be brave, truthful, obedient, clever, find them so. An outside opinion is of extreme value, and a house master or a head master is the ideal person to give it. When a house master and a father meet on equal grounds and discuss the son's welfare honestly, the auspices could hardly be more fortunate. They so rarely meet, because parents and schoolmasters do not trust each other, because they have adopted the false position of buyer and seller; the combination remains, however, none the less ideal.

I do not myself see what advantages the day school possesses over the boarding school, save those that are concerned with a particular

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

facet of morality, and beyond the weakening of a partisanship that is inclined to put a boy in blinkers. There are some very fine day schools in the country, but the day school, especially of recent years, has tended to become an alternative for parents with large families who cannot afford to send their sons to expensive boarding schools. And, after all, the suggestion that day schools should be generally substituted for boarding schools is obviously impracticable.

Many of the finest Public Schools are situated in remote parts of the country, others in small towns that were once honoured with a monastery. How are these venerable institutions to be converted into day schools. A few retired colonels might possibly form a colony in Shoreham and send their sons to Lancing. A convenient train would take them to Brighton, where they might walk on the promenade and recall the reckless adventures of their youth. But civilisation draws us to big towns for our livelihood. However much the stockbroker might wish to send his son as a day boarder to Shrewsbury, he would find it quite impossible to do so. The town of Shrewsbury would provide no scope for his activities. He could not possibly settle there. A scheme that would involve the complete alteration of the public school system can only be called a revolution. A reformer has to work on his existing material. He cannot say—wash it out and start again. He cannot put back the clock.

Mr. Oscar Browning has said that when he

went to Eton in 1851 only five schools could lay claim to the dignity of being called a Public School. There must be at least fifty first-class Public Schools to-day; they are nearly all boarding schools, and every few years a comparatively unknown school proves itself a worthy competitor to older foundations. It is not the slightest use to say, even if we believed it, that day schools are better than boarding schools and leave the matter there. A politician might with equal ability draw up an elaborate defence of the feudal system. It may very well be that we should be all more happy if we could reconstruct society on a feudal basis: we might just as well express a belief that our efficiency would be increased were a kindly providence to dower us with wings. It may be, though I doubt it, that the advocates of the day school are in the right, that under such a system of education immorality and the blood system would pass. But it is for us to discover some method by which the existing system may be so modified as to produce of itself the required change.

Now it is very tempting for a controversialist, when he has completed the arraignment of his enemies, to slip hastily over the policy he himself proposes to adopt. I wonder how many letters have been addressed to the press during the last seven years in which the writer, having stated in strong terms the calamities to which a certain line of thought or policy has reduced the country, has demanded in a final paragraph that 'something should be done before it is

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals too late.' He suggests perhaps a 'change of spirit.'

It is a good weapon that 'change of spirit.' We can all of us, when occasion demands, indulge in spirited invective; we can all detect numberless flaws and inequalities in the existing social system. Why, for instance, does our income run to three instead of to four figures. Why are we paying away a third of that small sum in income-tax? The flow of indignation is swift, and by the time we have written our 950 words, it is not hard to devote the remaining '50' to a general appeal for 'some one to do something before it is too late.' Every contributor to the press has saved his argument like that some time or another. And, in the case of Public Schools, the trouble is that we can do little save repeat the parrot cry of 'a change of spirit.' For it is 'a change of spirit' more than anything else that is needed.

We are kept wondering, however, how that change is to be effected. S. P. B. Mais used to say that 'Literature would save us.' But literature is only a part of life, one channel of self-expression, and in the case of Mr. Mais one is troubled by the knowledge that he, himself, is in many ways the ideal schoolmaster. He has a genius for teaching. He happens to have taught literature and mathematics, and because he taught them so successfully he has imagined that they are the panacea. He is too modest to realise any subject that he taught would have assumed the qualities of a panacea, that it was

Public School Life

he and not his subject that was important. He could rouse his form, if he wished, to a high pitch of enthusiasm by a lecture on the properties of Cherry Boot Polish. But 'he is alone, the Arabian Bird.'

Martin Browne suggests religion. And, no doubt, for the truly religious boy many of the difficulties of school life would be smoothed out. Unfortunately, however, religion plays, and will play, a small part in a boy's life at school. A boy has been told to believe certain things by his parents, and he has accepted these beliefs unquestioningly and without enthusiasm. They have not been tested by experience. They are not real to him. Religion, in its truest form, rises out of the conflict of a man's life. Faith is subconscious thought. I do not think you can expect the average small boy to be deeply influenced by religion. His religion, if he has one, is an unswerving devotion to his house and school. He would be ready to sacrifice himself for what he considered to be the school's service.

Forty years ago a captain of my old house died after a kick on the head received in the Three Cock, the big house match of the year. The brass on the chapel wall which is dedicated to his memory,—

*'Te duce, care Puer, pueri cum lusimus olim
Optimus in cursu quem sequeremur eras
Caelestem exacto tetigisti limite metam;
Fratribus ah, fratrem detur ad astra sequi.'*

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

appealed far more to our imagination than the story of early martyrs. Action rather than contemplation is the essence of school life.

I am aware that many will disagree with this assertion. Both Martin Browne and Jack Hood made in their books a great point of religious teaching and early confirmation, but I cannot help feeling that in this respect they are exceptional; certainly if they had not been exceptional they would not have written books; religion has meant a lot to them, and they feel that it should do the same for others. It is a mistake we all make in our different spheres. The poet thinks he will reform the world by placing the poems of Shelley in the hands of trade union officials; and the small craftsman sees life redeemed by hand weaving and hand pottery. We all think that the prop that has supported us will support others. It is part of our egotism. For the many, to whom faith is not intuitive, religion needs a solid foundation of experience.

A change of spirit requires a change of setting, and I am inclined to think that this would be provided were boys to leave school at seventeen instead of nineteen.

It would not, perhaps, from the point of view of the moral question, cause a very great diminution in the actual immorality between boys of the same age and the same social position. But it certainly would improve matters. As things are at present, the boy of fifteen and a

Public School Life

half occupies a pleasantly irresponsible position. He has left behind him the anxieties of the day room, and the responsibilities of seniority are still far distant. His peccadilloes are not taken seriously. He can rag in form and smash windows in the studies without prejudice to his future. He has imbibed the example of Prince Hal. For a while he may rollick with Falstaff at the Boar's Head. Time enough to settle down when the privileges of power draw nearer him. For a good year and a half he may make merry.

The lowering of the age limit would telescope events; it would reduce the period of revelry to a couple of months. No sooner would a boy have ceased to be a fag than he would be under the eye of authority as a candidate for responsibility. A display of rhodomontade would prejudice his future. He would play for safety; and such considerations would certainly place a check on his moral lapses. He would think twice. If he was discovered he would have no time to recover his position by subsequent good behaviour. He would be passed over in the struggle for promotion.

To a certain extent the lowering of the age limit would prevent that type of immorality that takes place between boys of the same age and same position, but only to a certain extent. There always will be such misconduct in schools; it will never be possible to stamp it out entirely, but it is possible to overrate its seriousness. Certainly the romantic friendship is more

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

important, and it is because of the romantic friendship that I advocate so strongly the lowering of the age limit.

I have said that the romantic friendship is the natural growth of an unnatural system; but even a natural growth develops soon or late, according to the soil in which it is planted and the climate by which it is nourished. The presence of boys of 18 to 19, by their example, force this growth like a hot-house atmosphere. In a boy of eighteen the sexual impulse has become defined. He understands the implications of its symptoms. He is old enough to be married. But the boy of sixteen is not so sure of himself. In him the impulse is wavering and undetermined. He does not understand the nature of the emotions that are moving him. And he only comes to understand it through the example of elder boys. If a boy were told nothing of the existence of romantic friendships, of their technique, of the complicated moral code that allows this and denies that, if his curiosity were not continually quickened by stray references in sermons and addresses, I believe that he would not, at the age of seventeen, have realised that the friendship he felt for a smaller boy was essentially different from that which he was feeling for his contemporaries. It would be a deeper, an intenser friendship, but he would not see that it possessed a different nature. Why should he? The schoolboy has read *The Hill*. He expects every Verney to find a Desmond. So much has been written about the lasting friendships of school

Public School Life

life. Every boy must have his 'special friend.' Why should he be any different from his fellows? There would be moments when he might wish to caress his friend, but he would immediately smother such a wish, feeling it to be foolish, girlish, unworthy of him. He would be too young, he would not have the intellectual independence to be able to say to himself: 'This is what I want. And what I want is natural to me. Damn anything else!' Shadowy imaginings would haunt his reveries, but they would never become defined in action.

For a boy of eighteen it is different. His impulses are strong; he knows now exactly what he wants. And he is prepared to get what he wants. He knows that the emotions he feels for a small boy are of a different nature altogether from the friendship that he feels for his contemporaries, and the fact that there are boys in the school old enough to have defined these emotions, provides a hot-house atmosphere for the development of younger boys.

To most people life comes at second hand. They learn from books, cinemas, and plays what are the appropriate emotions and the correct procedure for any given situation. The public school boy is no less conventional than his elders. He allows his inclinations to be directed into the accepted course. He is surprised, in the first place, by a delightful and unexpected emotion; but the surprise soon passes. He has formed just such another attachment as has

250

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

been formed by practically every senior boy in his house. He exchanges confidences, he seeks the advice of some older boy, and follows the convention. If there were no senior boys, no example, and no convention, the first surprise of charmed bewilderment would endure. In the course of time it might very well be that out of that first romantic story would grow a deep, mutual, and lasting friendship. But such a development is hardly possible in an unnatural society where children and fully grown men are herded indiscriminately together.

The example of elder boys, moreover, not only defines the nature of half-perceived emotions; it also forces emotions that would otherwise remain a long while in bud. There are many who consider it is the blood thing to have a *jeune ami*; that such a relationship is the privilege of a house colour. They want to be talked about. They have themselves spoken when juniors with bated breath of supposed 'cases.' They would like to be spoken of like that themselves, to feel themselves moving in an atmosphere of conjecture and intrigue, to gather an added sense of their own importance.

Besides this itch, a natural one, to occupy the limelight by copying the customs of the great, there is the subtle influence of indirect example. In the same way that a boy who goes often to the theatre and the cinema and observes there the charming processes of

Public School Life

love, begins to long for tenderness, and caresses, and endearments, so does the schoolboy who hears on all sides romantic confidences, find himself drawn into the glittering circle. This lure would at least be removed by the lowering of the age limit. That it would solve all the difficulties I would not for a moment maintain.

We cannot imagine a world in which men and women will not desert or betray each other; in which husbands will remain faithful and the unmarried chaste. Why should we expect school life, which is the world in little, to be so startlingly different. Parents refuse to believe that their own children are mortal: 'These things,' they say, 'may happen to our neighbour's children. They do not happen to our own.' And schoolmasters are only too anxious to reassure them. Parents have such faith in their sons that they will believe in the most superficial testimonials. They are so anxious to be deceived.

For this reason I believe that a mere statement of facts has value. There is much clamour to-day for reconstruction, and the controversialist who has not a cut and dried scheme for regenerating the world is looked on with disfavour. But on sex questions, which are after all intensely personal questions, which concern the individual in the first place and society in the second, only the superficial will dogmatise.

I cannot do better than quote from Havelock

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals
Ellis's General Preface to *The Psychology of Sex*:—

'A resolve slowly grew up within me,' he writes, 'one main part of my life-work should be to make clear the problem of sex. That was more than twenty years ago. Since then I can honestly say that in all that I have done that resolve has never been far from my thoughts. . . . Now that I have, at length, reached the time for beginning to publish my results, these results scarcely seem to me large. As a youth I had hoped to settle problems for those that came after; now I am quietly content if I do little more than state them. For even that, I now think, is much. It is, at least, the half of knowledge. In this particular field the evil of ignorance is magnified by our efforts to suppress that which can never be suppressed, though in the effort of suppression it may become perverted.'

If this is the conclusion at the end of his work and of his life, of perhaps the greatest living authority on sex, by what right does the amateur produce cheerful remedies.

In the case of the Public School it is indeed something to state the problems. There is so much ignorance to dispel; the ignorance of mothers, the ignorance of fathers who have themselves not been to a Public School, the conspiracy of silence of boys, old boys and masters. Too much and, at the same time,

Public School Life

too little, is made of immorality. Schoolmasters assure us that its appearance is occasional, but their attitude to it is that of a doctor who suspects that his patient is suffering from a malignant disease and watches all the time for signs of it to appear. The schoolmaster is always afraid lest he may be sitting on a volcano. He encourages the athletic cult as a preventative, in the belief that the boy who is keen on games will not wish to endanger his health, and that the boy who has played football all the afternoon and has boxed between tea and lock-up will be too tired to embark on any further adventures. It does not occur to him that the boy will be equally too tired to do his prep.

Such encouragement of the athletic cult is a confession of failure. It is as though the master were to say: 'I know I cannot interest you in your work. I know that unless I look after you, you will land yourself in all manner of mischief. A man must have a god of sorts, therefore make unto yourself whatsoever manner of god you choose, and I will see that it receives a fitting reverence.'

The public school code of honour, the majority of the standards, indeed, of school life are dependent on the athletic worship, and the athletic worship is in its turn largely dependent, not so much on the moral question, as on the official attitude to the moral question. Too much energy has been devoted to the damming of trickles, while on another side of the hill the

The Leaving Age with Regard to Morals

main stream has passed into the valley, laying waste the plains.

Greater honesty between boys, parents, and masters would undoubtedly achieve much. But more than a change of spirit is required. If no boy was allowed to stay on at school after the term in which he became seventeen years old, I believe that the moral question would, to a large extent, simplify itself.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LEAVING AGE WITH REGARD TO ATHLETICS

BUT it is not only on account of the moral question that I would advocate the lowering of the age limit. Such a reform would, I believe, make its influence felt on every side of school life. It would not alter, but it would modify certain conditions. The blood system would still exist, but less acutely. The gap between the junior and senior would be small. At present a man of nineteen who has been tried for his county eleven appears to the junior as a gorgeous giant. He and his friends live in a world apart, and they know it. A good three years separates him from the anxieties and indignities of the day room. No one, save his actual contemporaries, remember him as being anything but a blood. He is, and has been, a prince among mankind. He idles through his last two years, a very splendid, a very attractive figure; but, as we have already seen, his is hardly the ideal apprenticeship for life.

If the leaving age were fixed at seventeen instead of nineteen, so proud a position would be unattainable. There would still be bloods, still elegant creatures to saunter across the courts, languidly arm in arm. But a certain refinement would be missing. The languor would

The Leaving Age with Regard to Athletics

be less certain of itself, it would seem to fear a sudden assault and a fierce shout of 'Jones, you young swine, what right have you to shove on side?' There is a difference between the blood of eighteen and the blood of sixteen. It is only four terms since the blood of sixteen was suffering the last exaction of the law. He remembers vividly being beaten for ragging in the dormitories; it is not so long since he was a fag. If we were suddenly transplanted on a magic carpet into the luxury of an Eastern court we should stand for some time in dazed bewilderment, marvelling at what had happened to us, wondering who were these comely Ethiopians that prostrated themselves before us. For quite five minutes we should lack the courage to give an order. The blood of sixteen feels like this; can he have achieved so swiftly his ambition? It is only yesterday that he was trembling in the presence of the great. By the time he has recovered from his bewilderment and is preparing to exert his authority his year of office is at an end.

Not only, moreover, is the sixteen year old blood unable to hold so exalted an opinion of his own importance, but his immediate juniors refuse to recognise him as the gilded figure of romance. The men on the Fifth Form table remember when the head of the house helped them to wreck Bennett's study. They cannot feel him to be so vastly superior to themselves. It is different for the blood of eighteen. He has passed slowly through many circles to the

dignity of an Olympian. He has served his period of probation. He was not a colt's cap one season and the next a colour. He took a year to pass from house cap to seconds, and another year from seconds to firsts. He discovered himself gradually. He rose slowly to his greatness. By the time he has reached his last year the days of conflict are infinitely remote. He can hardly believe it possible that he was ever caned. He is, in fact, a great deal too old for a Public School. And as things are now it is impossible for any, save the exceptional boy, to reach a position of authority till he is eighteen, or at least seventeen.

A great many boys do undoubtedly leave between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, but by doing so they lose the most valuable lessons they should learn at school. A boy who leaves before he has been a house prefect fails to put the coping stone to his education. The responsibilities of prefectship are an invaluable experience. And when the house master begs the parent to let 'Arthur stop on another year,' the parent naturally gives way. And it is, of course, always the wrong type of person who stays on that extra year. It is the clever, the brilliant, the athletic boy, the boy who already stands out above his contemporaries and in the course of the next year will be even more prominent, that is encouraged to remain. It would not matter if the dull boy stayed on another year. His natural talents would not be sufficient to lift him to the rarefied atmosphere of Olympus. It is the

258

The Leaving Age with Regard to Athletics

second eleven colour who is urged to stay on to get his firsts. The fast bowler who is asked to captain the side next year, the exhibitor who hopes that another year's work will win him a scholarship at Balliol. The great become more great, and, as their undistinguished contemporaries fall out of the race, the gap between the prefect and the fag grows more pronounced. The intermediate steps are few and dimly seen. It is not surprising that the blood system should gloriously flourish. It would not so flourish were the leaving age to be fixed at seventeen. We have the proof of this in the knowledge of what happened during the war, when the big men left suddenly in August, 1914, when boys of sixteen sat at the Sixth Form table, and when no one stayed on at school after his eighteenth birthday.

War conditions were, of course, abnormal. It was inevitable that at such a time the rewards of school life should lose their value. It was impossible to feel the old excitement about the result of a house match when the morning paper had brought with it the story of Neuve Chapelle. The winning of cups and the gaining of colours ceased to be an end in themselves. For the boy who was prevented by lack of years from joining the army in 1914 school life became a period of probation, of marking time. Life in its fullest sense was waiting for him on the other side; no prefect ever looked forward to Oxford more eagerly than those of us who were still at school in 1915 looked forward to the day when we

Public School Life

should join the army. Our imagination was quickened by the stories told us by old boys returning from dépôts and from the front. Was it possible that Smith, who had played with us only eight months earlier in the Two Cock, should be in charge of a company in the front line trenches? We fretted at our tether; our eyes were fixed on the future. We scorned the prizes that lay to our hand. We began to reconstruct our scale of values: it was not only the giants of the football field who were winning honours for themselves and for the school in France. Queer, insignificant fellows who had never risen above the Upper Fourth, and had never been in the running for a house cap, came home on leave with the blue and white riband of the military cross. We began to realise that it was not only the blood that was entitled to our respect. The blood system received a rude shock in August, 1914. It will never, unless we become involved in social revolution, receive such another. I believe, however, that it would be considerably modified were the leaving age to be altered.

There would be also less hooliganism and less bullying. The third yearer would no longer be in a position of reckless freedom. Studies would still be stripped, scholars would still be ragged, but the process would be compressed. The swash-buckling element would find itself sooner in authority. The scholar would reach sooner the immunity of the Sixth. And the prefect would be no less capable of keeping order.

The Leaving Age with Regard to Athletics

For, after all, the prefect owes his power as much to the system that is behind him as to himself.

But perhaps the greatest difference that the change would effect would be in the boy's attitude to his own life. Six years is a very long time to be in one place. I remember at the end of my first year overhearing a conversation between the barber and a boy who was leaving the next day.

'Well, Mr. Meredith,' the barber was saying, 'I suppose this is the last time I shall cut your hair. I have cut it a good many times.'

'I have been in this town,' said Meredith, 'for ten years: five years at the prep. and five years at the school. I'm jolly well sick of it.'

It is certainly a mistake to send a boy to the prep. of the school to which he will one day go. Ten years is too long. But six is too long, too—at that age.

It is not easy for any one under thirty to picture himself in six years' time. We look back and remember ourselves six years ago in the discomfort and disquiet of khaki. What a lot has happened since then. Who can tell what the next six years may hold? Very few men under thirty can look far ahead, and the new boy at a Public School who can see his life mapped out for six years naturally does not look beyond them. He hardly realises that there is a world outside. He will have to travel so far before he reaches it. He comes to consider his Public School not as a prelude, but as the whole sphere in which his personality has to move. Certain

Public School Life

prizes and certain honours await him. He does not pause to think whether those prizes and those honours will be of much or little service to him after he has put the cloistered world behind him. Not only is he incapable of viewing his life under the hard light of eternity, he is incapable of viewing it under the light of the fifty odd years of traffic that wait for him among phenomena. He accepts unquestioningly the standards and values of his school. He does not feel that he is preparing for a contest. That phase of endeavour belonged to his 'prep.' He has started the race.

There is a big difference between four years and six. It is a wall over which even the fag can peer on tiptoe. The passage of ambitions and loyalties and jealousies is much more swift. It is possible to consider four years as a prelude; and as soon as public school life is regarded as a prelude the scale of values becomes changed. The boy begins to wonder whether he is doing his best to fit himself for after life. He will cease to be contented with the honours that come to him on the way. Because his school is a fixed institution, because the scope of his masters is fixed within its walls, there is a tendency to regard him as an inhabitant and not a sojourner there. That is what the schoolboy should never be allowed to forget—that he is passing through one phase of his life into another; it is because he has forgotten that that he so often pauses bewildered and irresolute on the threshold of life.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

WERE the moral question to be tackled sensibly, and were the reduction of the age limit to modify the 'blood' system, and insist upon the fact that school life is only a prelude, I believe that athletics would occupy their proper place in the life of the school. The social force of religion depends, to a large extent, on the appreciation of the importance of what will follow the 'here and now.' During the war, when the future was insecure, and no one could see anything certainly beyond the limits of a fortnight's leave, the country plunged recklessly in search of pleasure. No one looked ahead. No one paused to consider what would be the harvest of their sowing.

The eyes of the preparatory school boy are fixed upon the future. He knows that the successes and failures of the moment are unimportant. He knows that a strenuous contest lies in wait for him. In consequence there is at a Preparatory School little of the fanatical devotion that colours the fabric of public school life. I remember a house master once saying that it was impossible for a member of a house side to do much work while the house matches were in progress. And, as the house matches covered a period of six weeks, this was a pretty

Public School Life

generous allowance. At the same time the house master only spoke the truth: it was practically impossible to do much work during the house matches term; we could think of little else. Every evening we would discuss at considerable length the afternoon's punt-about and the morrow's match. We would devise schemes for the better outwitting of our opponents. We would discuss the weakness and strength of individual players. And the majority of masters, certainly of house masters, shared this fervour. It is true that a certain house master, when presented with the excuse for an indifferent prose that house matches were too exciting, remarked: 'I don't know whom they excite, they don't excite me.' But this assertion was belied by his subsequent behaviour on the touchline. During house matches there is an educational moratorium. In peace time the energies and interests of a nation are directed into a thousand different channels, but in war time every interest is secondary to that of war. And, while house matches are in progress, the atmosphere of a house is not unlike that of a nation that is at war. Individual members may have their private troubles, but they realise that these troubles are of small account at such a time. And, though it is no doubt admirable for the individual to feel himself of less importance than the community, it will hardly be conceded that self-negation in such a cause is likely to prove of any very permanent value to him.

Now there are those who will urge that boy

Conclusion

nature cannot be altered, that it is natural for a boy to worship games, and that you cannot expect him to be otherwise. But that I shall never believe is so. For myself, I know that I play cricket and football as keenly as I did seven years ago, that I spend a great many evenings with a Wisden in my hands; but that I manage to get through a fair amount of work between each January and December. That is not in itself a fair argument. One cannot arraign the enthusiasms of sixteen before the enthusiasms of twenty-three any more than one can arraign the enthusiasms of twenty-three before those of forty. There is no more fallacious argument than the 'when you have reached my age, young man.' At different stages of our life we are vexed by different problems. At twenty-three our sexual life is of vast importance; it stretches before us, a wide field for courage, enterprise, adventure. In the man of forty, curiosity has been satisfied. He has settled many of the problems that perplexed him when he was a young man. And he says: 'My dear fellow, all this that is worrying you does not really matter.' But he is wrong. It does matter to a young man of twenty. And nothing is trivial that has ever exercised deeply the human spirit.

In a world that is in flux the permanence or impermanence of any emotion is of less matter than its intensity while it lasts. Sooner or later everything must desert us. Is the brain a useless possession because it will one day soften. Are teeth less efficacious now because one day

Public School Life

they will decay. Is a young man of twenty going to listen to the impotent man of sixty who mutters: 'Young man, the charms of woman are a snare and an illusion. When you have reached my age you will be no longer moved by them.' For that is where the 'when you are my age, young man,' argument finally lands us. And it is not fair to say to a boy of seventeen: 'This mad excitement about games is absurd. In six years even you will have outgrown it.' It is for us to decide whether this mad excitement is the natural expression of a boy's temperament, or whether it is the peculiar growth of a peculiar environment.

I will take as an example Sandhurst as it was in the autumn of 1916. It was composed almost entirely of boys straight from the Public Schools, and I should imagine that the average age of a company was about eighteen, the age, that is to say, at which most of them would have been about to start on their last year. They brought with them the standards of public school life. One would have expected them to establish their standards at Sandhurst. They did nothing of the sort. There was nothing that bore the least approach to a blood system. There were seniors and juniors, that was all. There was no fierce cult of athleticism. The G.C. who scored tries in company matches was not granted a general permission to drive his bayonet through college furniture. In the daily life games played a prominent part. Indeed, the under officer whose company did not make use of the ground

allotted to it would have had to face an unpleasant half-hour with the commandant. But games never became the business of life. They were played for their own sake. They were untouched by professionalism. If a three-quarter missed a pass five yards from the line he did not bury himself in a far corner of the anteroom, apart from the gaiety of his companions. The average company side played just as keenly as a house fifteen at school. While we were on the field we were as desperately anxious to win. But we did not spend the morning in a state of nervous irritation, nor did the issue of the contests drive us to deep despondency, or to hysterical elation. A certain intensity had passed. Yet I do not think that ever before had I derived such pleasure from the actual playing of the game as I did at Sandhurst.

One would not, of course, hold up a military institution as the model for an educational system. But, from the point of view of athletics, the Sandhurst that I knew in the winter of 1916 and the spring of 1917 possessed all the merits and none of the faults that one associates with the average Public School. And yet that Sandhurst was composed of the same boys that a few months earlier had, at their Public Schools, rigidly observed the exacting ritual of the great god of sport.

Reasons for this change are not difficult to find, and it may be noticed that they are in line with the improvements suggested in an earlier chapter. There is no blood system, because there

Public School Life

is little disparity of age between the G.C.'s. Juniors belong to a lower caste than the seniors, but they inhabit that lower world without worrying much about what is happening in the superior world. Contact between the two is not established. There is a hard dividing line. A junior may not sit on a certain side of the anteroom. There is no social fluidity. One is one thing or the other. Athletic worship in school was due largely, I suggested, to the absence of any other focus for a boy's enthusiasm. At Sandhurst several such focuses were provided. To begin with, the work was interesting. The morning was not a mere succession of tiresome hours relieved by a quarter of an hour's break. The G.C. did not listen to lectures and tactics with the listless condescension that he had paid formerly to the Greek syntax; he realised that the knowledge of the subjects he was studying would be of practical value to him at a later date. He was anxious to be a good officer. He was, therefore, interested in his work. He was also at Sandhurst for a very little while. He regarded Sandhurst quite definitely as the anteroom to a career; he never imagined it to be anything else. In a few months he would have joined his regiment. The honours he won at Sandhurst would be of little value in themselves, and were only worth the gaining in as far as they would enhance the reputation which he would take with him to his regiment. A Sandhurst cadet was always looking beyond the present.

Nor did the officers in charge of companies

feel any compunction to prescribe athleticism as an antidote to immorality. In the first place, they were not responsible for the G.C.'s moral welfare, nor was there, indeed, any occasion for alarm. The amount of immoral conduct between G.C.'s, if there was any, must have been extremely small. Such conduct is essentially *faute de mieux*: women were abundantly available for those who wanted them. And in a town such as Camberley there were endless opportunities for innocent romance.

The three main causes for athleticism were removed, and in consequence there was no athleticism. Now it is obviously impossible for all these conditions to be introduced into a Public School. There must be a disparity of age, schoolmasters must feel some anxiety about the morals of the boys that are to be entrusted to them. But, if we can show that the complete removal of certain conditions of public school life can entirely remove certain evils, we can only assume that the modification of these conditions would cause considerable improvement. The smaller the disparity of age between the eldest and the youngest boy, the less intense will be the blood system. The shorter the period that a boy spends at school, the less will be the tendency to regard school life as the complete compass of his life. The supply of another focus for a boy's enthusiasm will diminish the strength of his athletic ardour. The greater the honesty in tackling the moral question, the less will masters feel themselves forced to recommend

Public School Life

athleticism as an antidote to immorality. And these changes are, I believe, possible without altering appreciably the principle of public school education. The supply of other focuses may, at first glance, seem a highly difficult job. It may, indeed, be advanced that were there another focus, athleticism could not exist in its present state, and that there would be no need for a reduction of the age limit. But I am inclined to think that it would be hardly possible to run any school which contained boys of thirteen and boys of nineteen and not have a blood system and an athletic worship. The forces of a natural inclination are too strongly entrenched behind the barricade of six years. The masters do not stand a fair chance. But the weakening of one force means the strengthening of another. A lowering of the barricade by a couple of years would give the other side a chance of contending equally. The moment a boy realised that the prizes of school life had only a temporary value, he would question his blind devotion to the religion of athleticism. He would wonder whether other things were not worth while. His allegiance would be divided.

But the passing of regulations cannot in themselves effect a reformation. They can be of great assistance; they can support and they can protect. They cannot build. And, in the study of public school life, we have to return in the end to the point from which we started. Boys and parents and schoolmasters must meet on a common ground and discuss their mutual welfare.

They can do nothing till they are honest with each other, till they face the facts together. When they had once done that they would not find the road hopelessly barricaded. The solutions that I have, from time to time, suggested in these chapters, would, I believe, prove beneficial. But it is as a statement of facts, an analysis of certain conditions, tendencies, and lines of thought, that I would chiefly submit this book to the consideration of parents and schoolmasters and those others who are interested in these questions. For nothing can be done till the conspiracy of silence, the policy of evasion and self-deception, the diplomacy of the merchant and his goods is broken down, till, that is to say, parents and schoolmasters meet on the common ground of co-operation, till they can look each other in the face and say: 'Things are so, and it is for us to find a remedy.'

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